

A SHOOTING TRIP TO KAMCHATKA

BY E. DEMIDOFF
PRINCE SAN DONATO

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A SHOOTING TRIP TO KAMCHATKA



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ON THE SAND-SPIT AT PETROPAVLOVSK
The Author his wife & Mr S. George Littledale

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AUTHOR OF

"HUNTING TRIPS IN THE CAUCASUS"

"AFTER WILD SHEEP IN THE ALTAI AND MONGOLIA"

WITH 113 ILLUSTRATIONS
5 PHOTOGRAPHS
AND 2 MAPS

LONDON

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1904

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(The Author, his Wife, and Mr. St. George Pitt-Rivers)
ON THE SAUNDERS AT LETKOVAVLOVSK



ON THE SANDSPIT AT PETROPAVLOVSK

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TO
MY WIFE
THIS BOOK OF SPORT AND TRAVEL
IS DEDICATED

PREFACE

IN 1897 I devoted six months to a successful expedition on the borders of Siberia and in Mongolia after *Ovis ammon*, the largest sheep in the world, an account of which I have since published in a volume entitled *After Wild Sheep in the Altai and Mongolia*. Since then several short trips, one after ibex in the Sierra Nevada, another to the Kouban district of the Caucasus and to the Galician Carpathians, and a third to Sardinia after moufflon, left my longings for pursuit of game in more remote regions still unsatisfied. Finally, in the autumn of 1899 circumstances once more favoured four months' leave of absence, during which time a good deal might be done. My wife and Mr. St. George Littledale were to be of the party, and in our preliminary councils various suggestions were made. "Let us see; a month or five weeks will take us somewhere (the coveted *x* of the problem), two months' shooting, and a month's journey back. Why not Mombasa? Plenty of cartridges wanted. How about the Yulduz valley? Sure to get sheep

and ibex, perhaps stags. Alaska seemed attractive with its wild sheep, mountain goats, and large moose. Kamchatka? with its *Ovis nivicola*, caribou, and huge bears."

In this manner we debated till a final decision was made in favour of Kamchatka,* a land in which personally I was particularly interested, and having already brought out two volumes on Big Game Shooting on the confines of the Russian Empire, embracing the Caucasus and the Altai, I was ambitious to complete the trilogy with an account of hunting in the Far East.

The lofty volcanic peaks and snow-clad mountain ranges of that distant peninsula, besides bearing the prestige of the "unknown," specially attracted my attention both by their natural treasures of northern scenery and by the probabilities of coming across game unmolested as yet by half-wild natives. As will be seen later, I was partly mistaken in this

* I feel obliged to draw the reader's attention to the true spelling and pronunciation of the name "Kamchatka," which so many Englishmen invariably spell "Kamschatka," and pronounce as if there was a third "k" in the middle of the word, after the "s." The name is probably derived from the Russian word "Kamchaty," which means "uneven or rough," with regard to the surface of the ground. It is a term which the Russians (or rather Cossacks) who discovered the country used when referring to the peninsula. It must be borne in mind that these adventurers came through the Siberian steppes, and

last supposition, though, with regard to the present condition of the land, I may still quote the words of a celebrated explorer of the eighteenth century,* who wrote: "Bears are the only engineers in Kamchatka." The salmon fisheries of the peninsula, of which I had heard marvellous accounts, also somewhat influenced our decision to visit that country; and if only the fish could be tempted by fly, minnow, or spoon, a forty-pounder at the end of one's line was by no means a slight attraction. Summer months were naturally chosen for the execution of our plan, and preparations for the journey having delayed us in London till the end of April, 1900, we decided to travel *viâ* the Siberian Railway and Amurland to Vladivostok, whence the first of the two annual steamers that leave that port bound for Kamchatka, usually in the middle of June, was to carry us and our fortunes. Prospects of "fresh fields and pastures new" now rose before me together with gleaming hopes of sportsmen's red-letter days, which helped

had marched for years across immense stretches of marshes, and it seems natural that the high mountain ranges must have impressed them as the striking feature of this new region. I have adopted the "ch" in spelling "Kamchatka" because the "ch" in the word, as pronounced in Russian, has its corresponding sound in the English language (*e.g.* as in chat and poach).

* Dittmar.

to obliterate the thousands of miles that separated me from that furthestmost corner of Asia. The mere word "Kamchatka" then conveyed to my mind ideas of a distant hunting fairyland across the seas, where marvels abound and countless animals graze undisturbed on the alpine pastures, or lie chewing their cud in corries round colossal volcanoes.

Now that I look back on my trip as an accomplished fact and a thing of the past, the magic element has given way to close reality. The goal has been reached, the country visited, the scenery admired, the trophies of *Ovis nivicola* obtained. But in the dim future, when unexpected events happen to recall souvenirs of bygone days, Kamchatka will reappear in my imagination with its fantastic scenes of "happy hunting grounds"; undergone hardships and disillusion will melt before visions of precipitous cliffs and snowy peaks, and the craggy outlines of that inhospitable and neglected land will once more with greater force break the monotony of those vast misty stretches of the North Pacific Ocean.

DEMIDOFF.

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Map to illustrate Prince Demidoff's Sporting Trip to Kamchatka
In pocket at end

A SHOOTING TRIP TO KAMCHATKA

CHAPTER I.

A brief history of Kamchatka—Commencement of Russian extension eastwards—Cossacks from the Don led by Ermak—Conqueror of Siberia—Extension to the Yenissei and the Lena—The founding of Yakoutsk—A fort on the Okhotsk Sea—Alexeieff, the first Russian in Kamchatka—Murdered by natives—First reports from Kamchatka in 1700 with furs collected as taxes—Peter the Great's reforms—The Nijni-Kamchatsk fort—The revolt of 1707—Troubles in Northern Kamchatka—A sea route found necessary—Okhotsk to the mouth of the Bolshaia—Discovery of Petropavlovsk harbour—Anti-Russian rising in 1731—Destruction of Nijni-Kamchatsk fort—Russian colonisation from Siberia in 1740—Failure of agricultural experiments—Adverse conditions of climate—Encouragement of private enterprise by Catharine the Great—The growth of trade—The first commercial company formed in the Aleout Islands—Annexation of the Prybiloff Islands—Foundation of the Russian Seal Fisheries Company, originally the Russo-American Company—The trade in sealskins—Appointment of a military governor—Effect of the Crimean War—The Trans-Siberian Railway—Restoration of peace and revival of trade.

IN order to throw some light on the events which brought about the discovery of Kamchatka, it is necessary to retrace our steps to the end of the sixteenth century, which may be rightly termed the starting period of Russia's eastward extension. Since that

time never has the policy of the Moscovian monarchs deviated. Gradual advance across the north-Asiatic continent has been their constant care, and the Treaty of Aïgoun with China in the fifties, incorporating the whole of Amurland with the Russian Empire, was the last link of that long chain of conquests and annexations.

In 1583 the first impulse was given by Ermak, a Cossack from the Don, who, with a handful of followers, crossed the Ural Mountains in search of adventures. The Moscovian Government, at that time under the despotic rule of the Tsar Ivan the Terrible, gave a semblance of support to the hardy pioneers, and instructed them to bring as many lands as they could "under Russian dominion." The party under Ermak consisted of rough, unscrupulous men, whose sole aim, in the task they had undertaken, was plunder, and there can be no doubt that the Government's intentions in supporting the enterprise were directed more towards ridding the country of its scum than carrying out any determined plan of fresh acquisitions. If, however, an improbable success crowned the expedition and the men outlived undergone hardships, fruits would be welcome, subdued tribes brought under taxation, and the conquerors' former misdeeds wiped off as a due reward

for their pluck. Great must have been the difficulties they had to encounter, and long their vicissitudes. Unfortunately no record of their struggles has reached us. Rivers were the only assistance nature afforded them. Virgin forests, impenetrable marshes, wild nomad tribes stood in their way; these were naturally hostile to the new-comers, and offered every resistance in their power. But they were speedily subdued by their comparatively more civilised antagonists, and arbitrary taxes in the shape of furs and skins were imposed upon them. In this manner the adventurers reached the Irtysh, and went as far as the place where now stands the town of Tobolsk; here they built an entrenchment as a foothold for further explorations. Ermak, the leader, is supposed to have been drowned in crossing the River Ob. His name is now coupled, in Russian tradition, with the far-sounding title of "Conqueror of Siberia," and the mantle of the hero has entirely covered the crimes of the brigand. The few of the party that returned from their wanderings brought back both "sable and fox" to the Moscovian Tsar, and gave glowing accounts of the wide-stretching territories they had taken possession of in his name.

This was the first step; the result was apparent, and new jewels were soon to be added to the Russian

Crown. The beginning of the seventeenth century found Russian dominion extended to the banks of the Yenissei River and later to the Lena, where, in 1638, the Government actively supported the work of the Cossacks by founding the town of Yakoutsck on the spot where six years before a small fort had been built, and by placing the district under the administration of an appointed governor or *voievoda*. Henceforward Yakoutsck was to be the central point from which started the subsequent invading parties of Cossacks, who gradually reached the Okhotsk Sea, on whose shores they erected an *ostrog*, or fort, and eventually poured down from the north into the Kamchatkan Peninsula. In 1643 an expedition of a hundred Cossacks, under the leadership of Vassili Poiarkoff, crossed the Stanovoi range and discovered the Amur.

In 1644 another party reached the Arctic Ocean by descending the Kolyma River on rafts, and took up a firm position at its mouth. Officials were despatched to those distant parts with orders to collect taxes from the subdued natives, followed not only by adventurers of all kinds, but also by tradesmen, who were attracted by the rich furs of the country. In 1648 seven boats, with Cossacks on board, started from Kolymsk along the northern coast of Siberia, under the com-

mand of Dejnèff. This expedition, at the expense of an enterprising merchant called Alexeieff, who himself took part in it, encountered a heavy storm, which destroyed half the flotilla. The remaining half, however, with the leaders on board, crossed Behring Straits and landed their persevering crew at the mouth of the Anadyr River. Alexeieff continued his course southwards, and is supposed to have been the first Russian who visited Kamchatka. The legend says that he wintered on the coast of the peninsula, and was murdered, together with his men, by the natives. The fact remains that he was never heard of again, and it was only a century later that Krasheninikoff, whose standard work on Kamchatka still possesses great interest, picked up the tradition which was then current among some of the tribes. Dejneff was more successful; he defeated the warlike Tchuktchis in several skirmishes on his way up the Anadyr, and established a fort some five hundred miles from the sea.

A Cossack, by the name of Atlassoff, was the first to bring back definite information on Kamchatka. He started in 1697 from the Anadyr settlement with a force of a hundred armed men, and reached the Kamchatka River, after having crossed several mountain passes and routed the Koriak tribes who inhabited the northern part of the peninsula. Leaving

a small band of Cossacks to defend themselves as they could against the surrounding hostile natives, he returned, three years later, to Anadyr, and thence travelled through Yakoutsck to Moscow, bringing back with him the *yassak* or taxes he had collected; these consisted of 3,000 sables, 17 sea otters, 4 river otters, 10 blue foxes, and 191 red foxes. Besides skins he had with him a Japanese, whom he had found among the Kamchadales, from a Japanese vessel wrecked off the coast. The era of Peter the Great's radical reforms had now commenced, and it is evident that the Government could not abandon a newly conquered land to "unknown strangers" (the Japanese), who had already attempted either to trade with or to secure it. Special attention was therefore directed towards Kamchatka. Atlassoff was promoted and sent back with full instructions to pacify the country and bring it officially under Russian dominion. The letters-patent with which he was supplied gave him almost unlimited power within his sphere of action. Unfortunately, though possessed of great strength of will and undaunted energy, Atlassoff was a man of unscrupulous means. Hardly had he reached Yakoutsck when he was accused of having plundered a merchant's house and put in prison, where he remained five years pending the verdict!

It was not until 1706, when news arrived of a general insurrection of the Kamchadales, that he was ordered out again at the head of a hundred Cossacks to quell the fermentation in Kamchatka.

In the meantime the small garrison left to keep up Russian prestige in the country held out a year, but outnumbered by the natives, whilst retreating to Anadyrsk were all massacred. The reinforcements, which had come too late, defeated the Koriaks, restored the fort on the Kamchatka River, and built a new one some thirty miles from the mouth of the Bolshaia River, on the western coast of the peninsula.

In 1702 the Nijni-Kamchatsk fort was established close to the place where the Kamchatka river falls into the sea. These three settlements, commanding both the main artery of the peninsula and another important stream flowing into the Sea of Okhotsk, were strengthened by fresh Cossacks from Anadyrsk. In 1704 taxes were being collected from the Kurile tribes inhabiting the southernmost part of Kamchatka and brought to Anadyrsk, the Government seat of the district. But the natives, and especially the Koriaks, still held out desperately for their independence. With the exception of the three fortified settlements just mentioned and their im-

mediate neighbourhood, the country remained without efficient control.

Two officials sent from Yakoutsck were almost simultaneously slaughtered by the Koriaks in the northern parts of the peninsula. Rumours of this quickly spread among the Kamchadales of the interior, and contributed to a wholesale rising; fifteen Cossacks were massacred while collecting *yassak*. Such was the state of affairs when Atlassoff, reinstated to his former position, appeared again in Kamchatka at the head of a hundred men, with two years' supply of stores, in the summer of 1707. The prestige of his name, backed up by strong reinforcements, soon brought the revolt to an end. The inhabitants round Avatcha Bay made a particularly gallant defence against the invaders, but were finally defeated with heavy losses. Here comes in a fresh element of discord; freed from the sway of a distant administration, the Cossacks began squabbling amongst themselves and rose against their leader Atlassoff, whose cruelty knew no bounds. He was seized by the rebels and confined in gaol at Nijni-Kamchatsk. In the meanwhile two new officials were appointed from Yakoutsck to look into matters in Kamchatka; one of them took three years to reach his post (1707-10), owing to constant hostilities with the northern tribes through whose

country he had to work his way step by step. The two colleagues joined with Atlassoff, and inflicted a severe punishment on the Cossacks who had taken part in the revolt. These, in their turn, took a terrible revenge on the unfortunate triumvirate, and murdered all of them separately. In 1711 they elected a leader from their midst, and gave full vent to their low passions. Anarchy reigned throughout the whole of the peninsula; the natives were unscrupulously dealt with, and feelings between the two races were as bitter as ever. Fearing, however, forthcoming reprisals on the part of the authorities, the Cossacks despatched a deputation to Yakoutsck with explanations of their conduct, overrating, if possible, the crimes of their victims, pointing out the services they had rendered to their mother country, and imploring a general amnesty.

In the meanwhile the Cossack leader who had acted so prominent a part in the mutiny was himself treacherously shut up by Kamchadales of the Avatcha valley, whilst raiding the district, and was burnt alive with several native chiefs, who insisted upon sharing his fate in the doomed building, provided that he should not escape. In 1712 a commissioner of the name of Kolesoff was appointed from Yakoutsck, with strict injunctions to put an end to Kamchatkan troubles.

Stringent measures were taken, including torture and capital execution, in order to bring the Cossacks to reason. The country was once more temporarily pacified, and parties were sent out to investigate the neighbouring Kurile Islands, with instructions to collect information about Japan. The fort of Nijni-Kamchatsk was abandoned for a more suitable spot at the foot of the Klioutchefs-koi volcano. The following years brought but little change in the state of affairs on the peninsula. More officials were killed by Koriaks on their way to Anadyrsk and the *yassak* was plundered.

In 1716 it was found necessary to discover a new route to Kamchatka, in order to avoid constant fights with the warlike Koriaks of the north. A ship started from Okhotsk and landed at the mouth of the Bolshaia River; this was the first attempt to reach Kamchatka by sea. Henceforward Okhotsk gained importance as a port, and became the administrative centre of Russian possessions in the Far East. In 1720 the country was still under the almost uncontrolled rule of the Cossacks, and one of the officials reported to Yakouts-k that if immediate measures were not taken to remove the troublesome Cossacks and replace them by others under strong military discipline, rebellion and anarchy would never cease to prevail in the ravaged

peninsula. But the period of Cossack rule and bloodshed was drawing to a close. In 1727 the Government fitted out two expeditions to north-eastern Asia; one of them, under the command of Shestakoff and Pavlutzki, was instructed to quell fermentation among the Tchuktchi tribes of the Anadyr district; the other, under Behring, was to delimit the frontier between the two continents of Asia and America. Though the Behring expedition was intended merely for scientific purposes, yet the presence in Kamchatka of men far superior in every way to the Cossacks (they had spent the winter of 1727-8 in Avatcha Bay, and discovered Petropavlovsk harbour) could not fail to influence the state of affairs in the peninsula, and lower, in the eyes of the half-wild Kamchadales, the prestige of their tormentors. Cossacks now appeared to them in their true light; they were but rough bands of adventurers, unsupported by their Government and plundering on their own account. These ideas gradually spread throughout the country, and resulted in what may be termed the last stand of the Kamchadales for independence.

In 1731 two *tayons*, or native chiefs, placed themselves at the head of their tribes. They were, moreover, encouraged to rebellion by news of the defeat and massacre of Shestakoff and his followers by the

Tchuktchis in a drawn battle. Khartchin and Gongotch, the two Kamchadale leaders, decided in concert to exterminate every Russian in the country, and to invade the valley of the Kamchatka River. A successful assault was made on the fort of Nijni-Kamchatsk, which was rased to the ground ; neither women nor children were spared. Fortunately for the invaders, a Russian schooner, the *Gabriel*, sent from Okhotsk to the relief of Pavlutzki, had been delayed off the coast by unfavourable winds, and lay at anchor at the mouth of the Kamchatka River. When news of the native uprising reached the *Gabriel*, the journey to Anadyr was put off, and men were landed with guns to the relief of the settlement. The fort was stormed, and the chiefs of the rebellion were sentenced to death ; other *tayons* met with a similar fate. The Cossacks spent the remaining part of the year in quelling the insurrection, and wholesale massacres took place. The combat ended, as the French say, owing to want of combatants. Had it not been for unsettled weather, the Kamchadales would have probably regained their independence, many a life would have been sacrificed in vain, and years would have elapsed before the peninsula found itself again under Russian rule. Such are the laws of the Universe—a mere chance, an unforeseen event, an atom has its

weight in the destinies of empires. As it was, the turning-point of the history of Kamchatka was reached; thereafter only a few partial disturbances occurred here and there, but the country was practically conquered and pacified.

Administrative questions now sprang up, together with measures tending towards the education of the newly subdued natives. With this view the Empress Elizabeth sent Major Merlin from Yakoutsck, with instructions for the government of the country as well as for the founding of orthodox missions and schools. He remained there until 1739; his companion, Pavlutzki, was appointed Russian Commissioner of Kamchatka under the supervision of the head official of the district, whose administrative centre was now Okhotsk. The importance of the latter town grew accordingly, as it became the seat of the Government and the only existing port. Pavlutzki was killed in a fight with the Tchuktchis of Anadyrsk in 1741; these warlike northern tribes gave constant trouble until 1755, when they were finally brought to submission by Shmaleff. As for the inhabitants of Kamchatka, they fell into complete apathy and have remained so ever since. The second Behring expedition (1733-43) brought no change in the affairs of the country; on the contrary, public interest turned towards its scientific results and

discovery of "great lands beyond." The peninsula was partly forgotten, and would have been entirely so, had it not been for Krasheninikoff, a member of the expedition, who appeared in Kamchatka in 1737 on the *Fortuna*, and has left us the first description of the country.

In 1740 the Government entered into a period of colonisation, and at first fifty families were brought over from Yakoutsik to Kamchatka; they settled down in the Bolsheretzki fort on the west coast, and gradually spread to the other settlements in the valley of the main river. In 1760 arose, in connection with supplies for the troops, the question of agriculture, which lasted over a hundred years, and after many an attempt at settlement ended in complete failure. At present almost the only remnants of corn-growing on the peninsula exist round the village of Klioutchi, at the foot of the Klioutchefsckoi volcano. A party of reliable men were sent over from Irkutsk with seeds and ploughing implements; every possible facility with regard to taxes was afforded them. Moreover, an ukase of the Government four years later gave full amnesty to escaped convicts who chose to devote themselves to agriculture in Kamchatka. None of these measures, owing to the conditions of the climate, ever answered their purpose. But this immigration

from Siberia gives a clue to the lineage of the present inhabitants of the country; they are almost entirely of a cross breed between the aborigines on one side and Siberian emigrants and escaped convicts on the other. Thoroughbred Kamchadales are practically extinct. To this period belongs the first impulse of private enterprise towards the fur-riches of the district. The rescued members of the second Behring expedition, amongst whom were Steller and Delille, who returned to Avatcha Bay after the discovery of the Commander Islands, where Behring himself found his fate, brought back news of the existence there of innumerable seals and otters. Kamchatka itself swarmed with fox and sable. Some of the more enterprising local inhabitants risked their lives in order to discover islands and regions along the coast abounding in furs. A new class of men sprang up—merchants. Owing to them the Aleout Islands were visited and Alaska was reached. These facts have their importance in the history of Kamchatka, because the latter is now employed as a basis for trading operations; Okhotsk gradually sank into oblivion towards the end of the eighteenth century. These traders, owing to whose enterprise Russian authorities became acquainted with the islands of the North Pacific and the American continent, were now energetically backed

up by the Central Government. The latter came to the conclusion that expeditions fitted out for different scientific purposes, such as those under Lieutenant Lind (1764), and Lieutenant-Captain Krenitsin and Levashoff (1766), cost immense sums to the Treasury and brought little or no result. Accordingly an ukase of the Empress Catharine the Great gave full scope to private enterprise, and ordered a staff of naval officers to be sent out, with instructions that one of these should be on board each trading ship for the survey of new country and coasts. Moreover, every ukase pointed out the necessity of "friendly relations and honest trade" with the inhabitants. In 1783, Shelekhoff, an enterprising Kamchatkan merchant, made his appearance on the Aleout Islands, and with a capital of 70,000 roubles (£7,000) founded the first commercial company, which gradually increased with the annexation of the Pribiloff Islands, and in 1798 was called the "Russo-American Company." This firm, under different names, has existed ever since, and is known at present as the "Russian Seal Fisheries Company."

Parallel with the growth of trade in Kamchatka, attempts were constantly being made towards agriculture and cattle-breeding in the peninsula. Both branches, and especially the former, after fifty years

of incessant failures, showed but little results at the end of the eighteenth century. In the meantime the colonists gradually assimilated with the natives, and took to more lucrative means of existence: hunting, dog-breeding, and fishing. Dried salmon replaced bread. In 1800 the increase of Russian possessions in the Far East necessitated the formation of a Kamchatkan regiment; its commandant was placed at the head of the administration of the district, with his seat at Nijni-Kamchatsk, on the eastern coast of the peninsula. This was a kind of "land militia," soldiers being granted concessions on condition that they should build farms and grow their own corn. The Russo-American Company was now in full swing; in 1803 fifteen thousand sealskins were traded out of the country. The Government strongly encouraged the enterprise, and fully comprehending the difficulties arising from want of supplies, which had to be brought *via* Siberia and Okhotsk, fitted out the first expedition round the world under Krusenstern; one of the ships was destined to assist the company. Petropavlovsk harbour in Avatcha Bay now became the principal foothold in north-eastern waters. All the following expeditions in the beginning of the nineteenth century anchored off Petropavlovsk, whose harbour, together with Avatcha Bay, is one of the finest, if not the finest

harbour in the world. In 1812 the Kamchatkan regiment was disbanded, and a contingent of marines formed at Petropavlovsk for the defence of the harbour, which then became the seat of government of the peninsula. A naval officer was appointed to that post. The campaign of 1812 and the wars with Napoleon withdrew for some years the attention of the Government from Kamchatkan affairs; but in 1817 the Russian Commissioner, Ricord, again raised the question of supplies for the natives, and ordered storehouses to be built in the principal settlements on the coast. At the same time he was granted a subsidy for the foundation of a school of artisans, with branches of carpentry, smithcraft, etc., at Petropavlovsk. In 1821 a plan of the harbour was confirmed, and an annual allowance given for the further progress of the works. In 1840 a celebrated German agriculturist, Dr. Kegel, was sent to Kamchatka, by order of the Emperor Nicholas, with instructions to educate the inhabitants in land cultivation and concert measures for their general welfare.

The school at Petropavlovsk was transferred to an important settlement in the interior, called Milkovo, and other branches of work were introduced, such as leather-tanning, etc. Unfortunately Dr. Kegel met with serious opposition to his innovations on the part

of the Acting Commissioner. The school was closed while still in an embryonic state, and both men were recalled. At the end of the forties, when the government of Eastern Siberia fell into the hands of Count Muravieff, Kamchatka had reached its comparative apogee. It became a separate administrative district, with a military governor at its head, under the supervision of the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia; Okhotsk was incorporated with the government of Yakoutsk. The first appointed military governor of the peninsula in 1850 was Captain, later Admiral, Zavoiko. If the programme of this well-meaning gentleman had been duly carried out, his proposed measures towards the civilisation of the country realised, schools founded, ships constructed, buildings erected, colonists introduced, Kamchatka might perhaps have obtained a well-deserved prosperity; but a spell seemed to lie on that unhappy country. The lengthy correspondence between Captain Zavoiko and Count Muravieff shows that the district was on the brink of a reform era when an unexpected turn of events altered the plans of the Government. Admiral Nevelskoy discovered the mouths of the Amur River and the possibility of navigation on that great East-Asiatic artery. Thereafter Kamchatka fell into complete oblivion, and has remained so ever

since. The cares of the Government then gravitated around the Amur district, and the town of Nikolaevsk was founded at the mouth of that river. . . .

The last episode in the history of that distant corner of Asia was the defeat of the Anglo-French fleet off Petropavlovsk. In 1854 news reached Kamchatka of the rupture of diplomatic relations between Russia on one side, and England and France on the other. The Russian Consul in America gave notice to Zavoiko that war was declared, and that Petropavlovsk harbour was to be put in a state of defence. The Anglo-French fleet, under Admirals Price and Fevrier-de-Pointe, entered Avatcha Bay at the end of August of that year; but after several attempts at landing the allied troops were driven off with the loss of 450 men, killed or drowned.

A monument now stands on the sandpit opposite Petropavlovsk in memory of the affair of August, 1854. Behind the village is a small enclosure, where three crosses indicate the burial place of the Russians, English, and French killed in action. In the spring of 1855 Zavoiko was energetically pushing on the works of defence, in case of a second attack by the allied forces, when orders arrived that all the available troops should be concentrated in the Amur district, and that the inhabitants of Petropavlovsk, if attacked, should

retire into the interior, and leave the village in the hands of the enemy. Here again we notice the predominance of the Amur country in the eyes of the Government. Admiral Zavoiko left Avatcha Bay in April, 1855; Kamchatka remains in the hands of petty administrators—*ispravniks*, and no Russian Governor-General has since set foot on that land. Lately, however, since the Amur and Ussuri districts have gained such importance in the commercial market of the world, owing to the Trans-Siberian railway, interest in Kamchatka, with its fisheries and fur-riches, has revived to a certain extent, and it is to be hoped that in the near future increase of trade will contribute both to the welfare and to a closer investigation of that unexplored peninsula.

CHAPTER II.

Preparations for the voyage—Leave London for St. Petersburg in April, 1900—Professor Sliounine's report of Kamchatka—Leave Moscow for the Siberian frontier—Crossing the Ob—The Central Siberian Railway—The Yenissei bridge at Krasnoiarsk—Arrival at Irkutsk, the capital, with M. Isvolsky, Russian Minister in Japan—Poor accommodation—The "Museum"—Professor Pershine's report on mountain game—Start for Lake Baikal—The route described—Crossing the lake—Myssovaïa to Stretensk, the terminus of the line—On board the *Amur*—Steamer aground—At Pokrovskoïe—Proceed to Mokho, a Chinese village on the Amur River—A gold-mining district—Arrival at Blagovestchensk—Departure for Aigun—Steaming down the Amur to Radde—Two Cossack hunters—Their report of native game—Reach Khabarovsk, the chief town on the Amur—Government House and the Museum—The line to Vladivostok, along the Ussuri River, twenty-seven days from St. Petersburg.

THE object of our trip having been decided upon, and our preparations completed in April, 1900, we secured in London the services of a photographer, Mr. Tallent, who consented to accompany us on our long journey, and to whom I feel much indebted for the excellent series of photographs due to his indefatigable energy. These now appear as illustrations to this volume, and I could hardly have secured a more useful collaboration. Out of some six hundred nega-

tives taken, I have carefully selected the clearest and most characteristic ones, believing that they will fully illustrate the most typical events of our journey and the scenery of Kamchatka, together with the types and mode of living of its inhabitants. Many of these have never been produced before, particularly those connected with the headwaters of the Kamchatka River and the country round its sources, where, until our visit, no human being, save perhaps some stray Lamut, had ever before set foot. Moreover, the sportsman will no doubt be interested in photographs of *Ovis nivicola*, taken as the trophies were brought into camp fresh from the hunting-grounds. Such information as we could gather in London on the subject of Kamchatkan sport was not very important, Dr. Guillemard's interesting account of his experiences on the coast of the peninsula being our sole guide. His journey down the main river from Petropavlovsk to Nijni-Kamchatsk merely gave indications of the only highway of the region, without touching the question of sport to be obtained *en route*, and the existence of wild sheep in the mountains of the interior still remained a conjecture. I was, moreover, informed of the difficulty of communication between Vladivostok and Kamchatka, limited to two annual cruises to Petropavlovsk, the ships calling on their return at all

the ports of the Sea of Okhotsk, which implied the disagreeable alternative of an additional month's sea voyage. This intelligence, however, did not damp our aspirations. Mr. Schwabe, of the fur-dealing firm of Crompton and Schwabe, kindly supplied the information we required, and confirmed the telegram I had received from the Russian authorities to the effect that our steamer was to start from Vladivostok on June 14.

We accordingly left London at the end of April for St. Petersburg, where Tallent was to meet us, having made the journey by sea together with our impedimenta, which, owing to the probable difficulties of commissariat in Kamchatka, had by that time considerably increased in bulk; the bill of lading showed four tons. We remained a few days in the Russian capital. Before my departure I took the opportunity of meeting Professor Sliounine, who had spent three years in Kamchatka on a Government mission, and who afforded us much information on those remote regions. He was at that time preparing a most interesting account of his experiences, which has since been published. Our conversation turned principally on the fauna of the country. I gathered from him that wild sheep existed on most of the hills north and south of Avatcha Bay, and especially on the cliffs overlook-

ing the sea ; that their habitat was vaguely defined, and their haunts in the interior quite unknown ; that, in his opinion, the most likely grounds were the wildest and most impracticable in the southernmost parts of the peninsula, round the Kurile Lake, but that few natives were acquainted with that country. Professor Sliounine also informed me that bears were to be found in great numbers on all the hills, but that caribou betake themselves in summer towards the Arctic Ocean, and emigrate all together in large herds ; they return towards the end of August, and pour into the peninsula for their winter quarters. Most of these statements we found to be correct. He added that salmon abounded in every stream at that time of year, and that we should get plenty of fishing. Prospects seemed bright except as regards caribou. Of the latter we picked up several fine antlers, showing the large size to which they attain. Before our departure I received the most welcome news that Monsieur Isvolsky, the newly appointed Russian minister in Japan, was about to start with his family to join his post, and that we should probably travel together. Notwithstanding the untiring pleasure of his company, and that of Madame Isvolsky, for all of us, I had heard of various difficulties for travellers beyond Irkutsk, *e.g.* that the line Irkutsk-Stretensk

was not yet open to the public, and that the shallows along the river Shilka often delayed passengers. The presence of a high official, however, would smooth down the trials which we might have to undergo, and our distinguished fellow-traveller was of great help to us, as will be seen later. M. Isvolsky and family, consisting of his wife and two children, started a few days before us in a special car, which was attached to the Siberian express train at Tcheliabinsk, where we met them.

On the 18th of May our train left Moscow conveying my wife, Tallent, my valet Cristo, and myself. On the following day we met Mr. St. George Littledale at the Slaviansky Bazaar (Mrs. Littledale was not one of the party this time on account of her health), and on the same evening the Siberian express carried us off to distant lands. The *train de luxe* starts once a week, on Saturdays, and is due at Irkutsk on the following Monday week. Our accommodation was good, though there was none of the luxury of the Paris Exhibition train. The restaurant was moderate, and the food greasy. There are four trains attached to the service of the Siberian express, three of which are of the Russian model, and one of the International Sleeping Car Company. We chanced to take the latter, which, I believe, is not the best.

However, there was little cause for complaint, and our spirits rose at every turn of the wheel.

We reached the Siberian frontier, Tcheliabinsk,



RUSSIAN PILGRIM WOMEN.

without incident, on the 22nd, and joined M. Isvol-sky and his party, which, beside his family, consisted of the First Secretary of the Legation, M. de Pok-levsky, and of the new Russian Consul at Hakodadi,

M. Hedenström, who had lived in the Far East, and took no slight interest in sporting narratives. As a matter of fact, his accounts of shooting in the Amur district contributed greatly to pass the long weary hours of inactivity, and his keen sense of humour, combined with a fertility of imagination, proved a great godsend to our small party. Our other companions were two or three engineers, and a lady on her way to join her husband, one of the constructors of the Manchurian railway. Another fellow-traveller, whom we constantly saw lounging in a corner of the car, and smoking cigarettes in a most tranquil mood, turned out to be a wealthy merchant travelling to his native town with the sole object of receiving the minister to Japan in his mansion at Irkutsk. This act of courtesy, or rather of heroism, for his return ticket implied 6,000 miles by rail, will probably remain obscure, as such incidents usually do, in the annals of humanity.

It is unnecessary to weary the reader with a description of the monotonous scenery of the West Siberian steppes ; these have already afforded scope for many a tourist's pen. Suffice it to say that the plains were endless ; a few birches here and there scarcely relieved the monotony of the scene. Here and there the line crosses immense wastes of marshy land, and if one of

us had taken up a position on the roof of the car with a 12-bore gun and a good supply of cartridges, he might have brought down many a mallard or teal.



OUR PARTY AT TCHELIABINSK.

The heat was intolerable, the more so as the train halted at every possible opportunity without passing the smallest stations. Between these, fifteen to twenty miles an hour was our utmost speed. M. Hedenström's

joviality never ceased to amuse the company. He gave Mr. Littledale and myself the most promising account of sport in the Amur regions, where he had spent a great part of his official career. In his opinion there was no better hunting-ground than the Khingan district.

The Khingan is a range of low timber-covered hills, through which flows the river Amur some two hundred miles beyond the town of Blagovestchensk; its northern part belongs to Russia, while the southern portion is in Chinese territory. He strongly advised us to visit that country, where he said "izubra" stags were plentiful, besides tiger, roedeer, musk-deer (native *tabarga*), wild sheep (?), and to our profound astonishment, aurochs. The two last-named species struck us as being so unlikely to be found in these regions, that we naturally expressed our surprise at such unexpected tidings, upon which M. Hedenström, whom we thenceforth called "Daddy" (short for Hakodadi), volunteered to wire to "the king of hunters," a Cossack named Lalitin, to meet us at Blagovestchensk and confirm his somewhat startling statements. Both Littledale and I assented to his proposal and the telegram was despatched forthwith.

After having crossed the Ob, whence we had branched off three years before on our way to the Altaï and

Mongolia, we entered the so-called Central Siberian Railway, and some two hundred versts beyond, close to the station of Taïgà, found ourselves in the midst of dense woods, which in Siberia bear the name of *taïga*. I need hardly say we quitted without regret



TYPE OF ENGINE ON THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY.

those endless steppes of the west. The forests consisted chiefly of huge larches, birch, fir, and occasional cedars. At first sight they strongly reminded one of the scenery round St. Petersburg. Numbers of trees lay rotting and moss-covered on the marshy ground, others half uprooted by gales leant against their neighbours in a state of desolation, the underwood

being thick and dense. It was evident that no human hand had ever attempted to preserve them. The train seemed to cut its way through at the modest speed of fifteen miles an hour. At one of the stations we were compelled to wait over four hours, owing to the fact that the man who looked after the water "reservoir"



BRIDGE OVER THE YENISSEI RIVER.

had gone off to his village carrying the key in his pocket. At another station the telegraph official was so drunk that he was unable to announce our arrival to the next station, which necessitated another delay of a couple of hours. On May 24 we crossed the beautiful Yenissei bridge at Krasnoiarsk, a town of no slight importance on the left bank of that river. Notwithstanding our numerous stoppages we reached

Irkutsk, only seven hours late, on the Monday we were due, May 28.

Irkutsk, the capital of Siberia, is a large and formerly prosperous town, situated at the junction of the Angarà and Irkut rivers. Between the railway station and the town the weary traveller crosses the



THE TOWN OF IRKUTSK.

broad Angarà on a pontoon bridge, and presently reaches the Métropole Hotel after a severe shaking over unpaved streets. But here his troubles begin. Words cannot depict the filth which has to be encountered. There is nothing for it but to bear up in stoic silence, and avoid crossing passages, where odours may involve nothing short of typhoid. The Isvolsky family put up at the merchant's house. Two

magnificently turned out *troïkas* had conveyed them to their home ; a third one had been kindly placed at our disposal. To my amazement our coachman addressed me in English ; I understood he had spent several years in America as a stud groom, and was now enjoying a well-earned rest in our fellow-traveller's service. Towards evening we bravely faced the odour of the passages, and holding our noses rushed out of the hotel for a drive. All the party met at the Circus, where we witnessed some fine equestrian performances and a couple of elephants playing chess. The secretary and the consul joined us there after a somewhat curious experience. Their jehu had driven them from the station to a most unmentionable place, known in the town as the "Museum," and they had had the greatest difficulty in the world to reach the hotel.

We were most anxious to resume our journey in order to catch the boat at Vladivostok on the 14th of June. A special train had been fitted out for the minister, who attached us informally to his person, and we were assured that we should be able to leave Irkutsk on the following night. Next morning my first visit was to the real Museum, and I was obligingly shown over it by the curator, Professor Pershine. There stood a fine *Ovis ammon*, from the Altaï,

a tame yâk, and a small "izubra" stag of the Amur district, besides stuffed birds, fishes from Lake Baïkal, etc. On the second floor we admired a room full of Buddhist curios and strange native gear of Tungùs, Buriat, and Yakout tribes; some of these were of fish skins. Moreover, I am indebted to Professor Pershine for some valuable information concerning mountain game in the Irkutsk region. He stated that Ibex (*Capra sibirica*) existed in the Tuncan hills some hundred and eighty miles south, but there were no wild sheep (*Ovis*) in that locality. He seemed to think that the latter were to be found in the Adùn-Tehalòn valley, south of Nerchinsk, and at the headwaters of the river Borza, but could not guarantee this. I caught sight, in the Museum, of an old skull of what I considered to be a Kamchatkan *Ovis nivicola*, but the curator was unable to throw any light on the subject, or give any explanation as to the origin of the head. He told me that there was a natural history museum at Chita, where we might find some interesting specimens; unfortunately, the half-hour our train stopped at that place did not allow us to inspect it.

Having been asked to dinner by Madame Isvol'sky's host, we betook ourselves to the merchant's residence at five p.m., the custom being to dine at that

early hour. The house was considered one of the finest in the town. We found it quite a large building, the rooms of unusual size and an immense ballroom in one of the wings. The furniture was of European make, mostly of crimson plush and anything but faultless in taste, while in the hall stood a papier-maché negro boy with a broad grin, showing a row of snow-white teeth and holding a brass tray. The house was lighted throughout by electricity, and lamps of every colour shone in each corner, roughly imitating flowers and fruit. The air was stuffy, the windows hermetically closed, notwithstanding the intense heat, and a thick layer of dust covered the bright red sofas and chairs. Madame Isvolsky added that water was so scarce that, when asked for, it was brought in drinking-cups. The proprietor must have been a very musical man, for under each bed, instead of the customary china, there was concealed, of all things in the world, a musical-box. Such was the noble mansion of the most hospitable of hosts. The dinner was long, with innumerable courses; the main feature consisted in drinking one another's health. The table was covered with numerous bottles of different shapes and sizes, and the wines differed merely in colour, their flavour being identical and uncommonly sweet. Our host was constantly leaving his seat to fill the glasses of his

guests, and would hear of no excuse. He became so pressing towards the end of dinner that we deemed it best to return to the hotel on the plea of having to pack up our belongings. Luckily the special train which was to convey us to the shores of Lake Baïkal was ready at the station, and we decided to sleep in the car that night.

Early in the morning we were awakened by angry voices in the passage; the train was already on the move. I hurriedly dressed, and rushing out of my cabin found Cristo in altercation with the guard. It appeared that one of my portmanteaus had been stolen during the night; it contained all my books and maps, some of which had been found by a gendarme strewing the railway line and had been brought on by him in a muddy condition. The thief had evidently scattered the contents of my bag in disgust. But the maps were lost and the robber was never discovered.

At nine a.m. we slowly steamed on to the pier of the lake and found the large ice-cutter *Baïkal* awaiting us alongside. This large steam ferryboat, built at Newcastle on the model of those on Lake Erie in the United States, transports the whole train of twenty to thirty cars to Myssovaia on the eastern shores of the lake—a distance of about sixty miles—in five hours.

The scenery round the lake is highly picturesque, surrounded as it is by craggy hills and dense fir woods. In the autumn months storms are frequent and greatly endanger navigation; in winter the ice forms deep crevasses, which render traffic very difficult. The interruption of the railway by this immense stretch of water prompted the Government to complete the communication by land, and join the two lines by a section running round the southern shores of the lake. The construction of this line was being carried on with unceasing energy at that time, and I heard that it was no easy enterprise, on account of the mountainous nature of the country. I gathered that bears were plentiful in the neighbouring forests. Seals abound on the northern coasts of the lake, as well as on its numerous islands. Several species of *Salmo* inhabit its depths (*Salmo omul*, *baicalensis*, *thymallus*, *fluciatilis*) also the "golomianka" (*Comphorus Baicalensis*), a fish which is peculiar to Lake Baikal and found nowhere else.

The morning was fresh, and icebergs still floated on the waters as we entered the steam ferry. The sun shone bright, and our five hours' crossing was by no means an unpleasant diversion. At Myssovaia we found a train waiting to convey us to Stretensk. It took an hour to unship the train on to the tempo-

rary wooden pier, as the rails would not fit. We were shown our respective cars. These turned out to be ordinary luggage vans roughly adapted for passengers; two or three square openings represented the win-



WITHDRAWING TRAIN FROM S.S. "BAIKAL" (MYSSOVAIA).

dows, and a wooden partition divided the carriage into separate compartments, while the furniture consisted of a table and two stools. They were used by the engineers of the line, who apparently never aired their dwelling; the atmosphere was dense and stuffy, and the panes were stuck to the wall with thick brown

paper. Our first step was to let in some fresh air by removing the window-panes, our second to sprinkle the walls and floor with eau de Cologne and Keating's powder. The line being as yet closed to the public, we were glad enough to find some means of conveyance, and presently settled down for our sixty hours' journey in comparative comfort. Unfortunately our carriages had no springs, which considerably increased the shaking we received over the newly constructed line, and reminded one of a drive in a Russian "tarantass." Towards evening our train started amidst the cheers of the Buriat population, which had gathered to witness our departure. At first the line ran along the shores of the lake, branching off eastwards through the dense *taïga* of the Buriat country. The night was exceedingly cold. Numerous wood fires on either side pointed to the carelessness of the inhabitants; we could count seven or eight of these fires at a time, and the trees close to the railway were almost all burnt, probably by sparks from the engine.

We followed the valleys of the Selenga and Khilok rivers, which at places widened to a couple of miles. The scenery was dreary and monotonous, with great stretches of birch and pine forest. On the following day we dined at Petrovsky Zavod, a Government

mining centre. Here I was told that the climate was most severe, there being hardly a month in the year without frost, and over three hundred days without rain or snow. A little before Chita we struck the valley of the Ingoda river after crossing the pass over the Yablonovoï range (about 3,500 feet) into the system of the Amur. Chita is quite a picturesque little town at the foot of the hills. I heard that tigers were not unfrequent in the neighbourhood. Our train advanced at quite a fair pace (fifty versts an hour), and we soon passed the famous Nerchinsk district, where convicts are deported and work in the Government mines. During the night, our last one in the car, we were awakened by an unusual stir and bustle outside. It turned out that our roof was on fire, and had it not been noticed at one of the stations, we should have had ample time to be smothered by the smoke, or burnt alive.

On June 2, at one a.m., we at last sighted Stretensk, the terminus of the line. Stretensk is a small village situated on the right bank of the Shilka, one of the most important confluent of the Amur. The river at this place is 150 yards broad with a rapid current. Unfortunately it is badly fed by its tributaries and becomes unusually shallow in summer, which renders navigation almost impossible at that time of year,

unless heavy rain falls in the mountains. It is inconceivable to my mind how the constructors of the Transbaikal Railway^a did not take into consideration this important item, which at times entirely stopped traffic and caused no slight delay in the conveyance of Russian troops during the Boxer War. The line ought to have been continued to Pokrovskoïe, at the junction of the Shilka and Amur rivers, some three hundred versts beyond Stretensk, and the *perekats* or shallows would have been avoided. As it was, the steamer which we intended to take (of the Amur Navigation Co.) had not turned up, and we found ourselves at Stretensk for an unlimited length of time, and with the disagreeable prospect of missing our steamer at Vladivostok. A Government steamboat, the *Amur*, had been placed at M. Isvolsky's disposal, and it was entirely owing to his obliging behaviour that we were able to continue our journey. He spared us a cabin on board, though there was but little accommodation for himself and family. A small launch, the *Sungari*, which was to accompany the minister in case of need, took on board Messrs. Littledale and Tallent.

We left Stretensk that same day at five p.m., lucky to get off. An hour later the dismal sound of our keel grating over gravel indicated that we had run

aground. The steamer stopped. A cable was fastened to the anchor, and after four hours' struggle we were again afloat. Our captain, who had deviated from the right course marked by buoys, was replaced by the second officer, and confined to his cabin, where the unfortunate man remained till we reached Blago-



THE "SUNGARI," STERN-WHEELER.

vestchensk. In fact, we never saw him again. During the night we were awakened by a rattling—the boat had struck shingle. Dawn found us on the same spot struggling with adversity. The weather was fine and warm. After twelve hours' labour we were on the move towards noon, and presently came in sight of four barges stuck in mid-stream. It was our fate to be soon in a similar position ; a sandbank detained us

till evening. The anchor had to be fixed ashore and towed from board by steam power, but efforts were of no avail, the depth of water being only $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet, while the *Amur* drew $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet. We finally managed to get afloat with the aid of the *Sungari*, which, being smaller, drew less water.



THE S.S. "AMUR" ON THE SHILKA RIVER.

The banks of the Shilka were quite lovely with their overhanging precipitous cliffs, covered by pine and larch. Large stretches of burnt forest bore witness to numerous wood fires. Small villages were scattered here and there, with their small wooden church towering over each of them. They are all *stanitzas*, and are inhabited by descendants of the

Cossacks, who were the first colonists of Siberia. We spent that night at anchor for fear of another *perekat*, and on the morning of June 4 advanced at the slowest speed. A lifeboat was despatched in front in order to measure the depths, and re-



RIVER SHILKA.

turned with the news that there was four feet of water everywhere. The *Sungari* had not turned up, and we began to fear another delay. In the afternoon we came across the company's steamer, which had been unable to move from the sandbank for the last three weeks, and was awaiting a longed-for storm in the hills! That day we passed a village

called Oust-Karà, where the celebrated Russian writer Dostoïevsky had been confined for many years. On the following day we were joined by the *Sungari*, to our great joy. Unhappily, one of our wheels got damaged—an accident involving another delay of several hours, which gave us the opportunity of going ashore and stretching our limbs. Once more on board our progress was uncommonly slow, and our hope of reaching Vladivostok at the time appointed gradually grew fainter. Many a time in shallow water did the well-known scraping sound reach our ears before we finally came in sight of the Pokrovskaïa *stanitza* on the morning of June 6. It had taken us four days to accomplish 358 versts (240 miles). At Pokrovskaïa we were in comparative safety, and time pressed as we entered the mighty Amur River. To our right lay Chinese territory, and our first halt in the afternoon was at a Chinese village named Mokho. The whole party, with M. Isvolsky at its head, went ashore to pay a visit to the *noyon*, or commander of the garrison, who received us most civilly. He showed us round his residence, where the ladies were struck most by an array of implements of torture for thieves and criminals; the latter were beheaded in a small yard at the back of the house. Before leaving him, His Excellency gave us

tea in his private dining-room, and quantities of stale sweetmeats were passed round, needless to say, with little success. Madame Isvolsky and my wife were particularly anxious to see a Chinese lady, and asked



BANKS OF THE AMUR RIVER.

the *noyon*, through his interpreter, whether they could be introduced to his consort, upon which the Chinaman appeared much surprised, and the answer was that there were no representatives of the weaker sex in the village. Later, however, during our promenade, we caught sight of two female figures, and to our question

on the subject of his false statement, the interpreter replied, in a sneering tone, that all the ladies of Mokho were of a very low morality! We bade farewell to our temporary host and took a walk round the village, which consisted of one street running



A STERN-WHEELER ON THE AMUR.

parallel to the river, filled up on each side with small dirty shops and a crowded population of miserable-looking Manchurian fishermen and petty tradesmen. I learnt that the district was a gold-mining one, and that adventurers from all parts of the Chinese Empire had sought fortune in the locality. They had formed

the so-called "Jeltugà republic," a few miles inland, and such was the disorder and lawlessness in their midst that the Celestial Government was obliged to send troops in 1886 to scatter the miscreants. Food on board was anything but good; supplies were scarce, and butter unknown. Our main support was soup, together with a few fragments of former prosperity, such as Littledale's cakes, bits of which were daily distributed with much parsimony "to make them last." Fortunately at one of the villages the cook managed to get hold of a freshly caught twenty-pound sturgeon, which was highly appreciated by the famished party. We now advanced steadily, covering about 250 versts a day (160 miles).

June the 8th was a lovely warm day on the Amur. The scenery had by now entirely changed; the hills had almost disappeared, giving place to low rolling plains on either side, covered with high grass and groves of poplar, ash, and young oak trees. At one of the *stanitzas* we picked up a sailor who had caught his foot in the engine of a steamer, and took him to the hospital at Blagovestchensk, where we were due on the following morning. In the afternoon we passed the so-called "Burning Cliff." It is supposed that the smoke which rises perpetually out of the ground is due to the slow combustion of coal. Towards

evening we landed at a spot where the river winds round in a well-nigh complete circle of over twenty miles, thus forming a narrow-necked peninsula, over which we walked. It was a beautiful clear night, and we lit bonfires in expectation of our steamer, which



THE "BURNING CLIFF" ON THE AMUR RIVER.

joined us an hour later close to Korsakoff post. The *Sungari*, with our companions on board, having not yet turned up, we decided to continue our journey to Blagovestchensk and await them there. As we mounted deck on the following morning (June 9), we found that the river had considerably widened;

its banks were now quite low, and covered with dense scrub. At 2.30 p.m. we were in sight of the town, and a few minutes later alongside the pier, having taken seven days from Stretensk for a distance of 800 miles.

Blagovestchensk is a comparatively large town lying on the junction of the Zeya with the Amur. Owing to its position, and chiefly to the discovery of rich gold mines in the district, the small Cossack post of Oust-Zeysk, founded in 1854, developed with wonderful rapidity, and soon rose to the position of a flourishing centre. In 1858, after the Treaty of Aïgun with China, it already ranked as a town. Gold attracted people in great numbers, and large fortunes were made in no time. Buildings were erected, traffic spread quickly, facilitated by the two navigable rivers, a parallel case with certain Californian towns, which sprang up like mushrooms in days of old on account of the precious metal in their neighbourhood. At the time of our visit business had somewhat slackened, though the town had retained its main feature of luxury. Champagne was to be obtained, but no beer—local industry had not yet developed, but all European articles were to be found at the two great rival and opposite stores of Kunst and Albers, and Tchurine and Co.



THE TRIUMPHAL ARCH AT BLAGOVESTCHENSK.

On the further side of the Amur, which is a mile and a half broad, some distance inland stands the Chinese town of Aïgun, with a population of over 15,000 inhabitants. It was quite a flourishing place, and little we thought that we should find it on our return journey a few months later a heap of smouldering ashes, with Russian sentinels guarding the ruins. The Chinese

War had passed over it like an avenging scourge. On the landing-place stood all the town officials in shining uniforms assembled to greet M. Isvolsky. I ran to the telegraph office and found a message from Mr. Schwabe informing me that he had secured five berths for us on the steamer starting for Kamchatka on the 14th. There was no time to be lost, but the *Sungari* was not yet in sight, and only five days remained to reach Khabarovsk (over 500 miles) and get over the Ussuri Railway (another 450 miles) to Vladivostok. In this emergency M. Isvolsky once more came to our relief. He proposed that the Kamchatkan party should embark with all its belongings on the *Sungari*, and start immediately. It was to be a race for life or death. In the meanwhile, having bought the stores we needed for this headlong race, I went in search of the hunter, Lalitin, to obtain confirmation of the consul's statement concerning sport in the Amur district. Instead of the mighty hunter of the Khingan, I found his son, who had arrived a couple of days previously, sent by his mother to meet us. He gave me the sorrowful news of the death of his father, who had been murdered the previous year by the Chinese "Khunkhuz," or wandering brigands, whom he had pursued in the woods for having stolen his rifle. The son seemed to know but little of sport,

and advised us to apply on our way to an old hunter at Radde, a Russian settlement on the river. I wired to him forthwith. To my inquiry as to stags in the Khingan mountains, Lalitin, junior, informed me that they were plentiful both on Russian and Chinese territory; that tigers were not uncommon, and could be tracked over fresh snow, and that there existed smaller deer which were to be found on the steeper crags. This I took to be a species of goral. He added that stags were larger than cows, and carried "trees" on their heads, and gave me a decidedly favourable and graphic description of the size of their antlers. With regard to wild sheep he knew nothing.

The hotel where we had ordered dinner was kept by a Frenchman. The rooms were clean and airy, presenting a strong contrast with that of Irkutsk. The bill of fare was most attractive, and equal to our expectations. During the repast a telephone message came informing us that the *Sungari* had arrived, and our companions presently joined us. One of them had shot a roedeer from board ship while the animal was crossing the river, and they had managed to secure it—a welcome addition to the larder. Littledale and I hurried to settle our departure with the captain, a Swede by birth, who agreed to take us on to Khabarovsk for the sum of 500 roubles (£50), and promised

to land us at that place in two days and a half. Our impedimenta were forthwith transported to the deck of the *Sungari*, fuel was collected, and after having bade farewell to the Isvolskys, who were starting a few hours later, we left Blagovestchensk at three a.m. on the 10th of June. That day was the hottest we had yet experienced. Our launch steamed at full speed in mid-stream, averaging fourteen miles an hour with the priceless help of the current. At first the banks of the Amur were low; poplar, ash, and willow growing profusely on both sides. As we advanced, the river grew narrower, till we neared the Khingan region, where, for a hundred miles, it flows through comparatively narrow gorges, and the country becomes wilder, mountainous, and highly picturesque. Precipitous cliffs overhang the water; the woods alter in character, giving place to fir, oak, and occasional cedars. We stopped at a village called Poyarkovo in order to get supplies, but there was nothing to be obtained for love or money, save a few eggs and some milk. The houses were clean and tidy, and the inhabitants, Cossacks, appeared to be well off. In the evening we witnessed a thunderstorm such as I have rarely seen. Flashes of lightning swept the skies unceasingly for over two hours, whilst a most beautiful purple sunset lit up the horizon to the east. A deluge of rain poured

on the *Sungari*, and the water running through the ceiling inundated our cabins. During the night a dense fog set in, delaying our arrival at Radde, which we reached at six a.m., three hours overdue.

There we were met by two Cossack hunters, whose accounts of sport in our district roused our spirits. According to them, "izubra" stags were more plentiful in the Chinese Khingan, a couple of days' march in the interior of the country, the best time of year being the end of August and September. Ponies could be got at Radde, as well as men for the caravan. One of the hunters, who went by the name of Kobosoff, had killed two tigers the previous winter. They said that there were plenty of bears, roedeer, and pig, as well as that mysterious animal, inhabiting the rocks, of



PANORAMIC VIEW OF KHABAROVSK

the size of a big sheep, which they called *iman*. We thought, according to their description, that it must be a kind of serow, as its horns, they said, were not very long. Musk-deer are also common. We promised on parting to return in August, and employ them for the expedition; unfortunately the Boxer War, which broke out soon afterwards, altered our plans, the country being scoured by stray bands of Chinese brigands, whose presence involved danger even to the most peaceful of foreigners. On the following day, June 12, at two p.m., we were in sight of Khabarovsk, the chief town of the Amur district. The river is over three-quarters of a mile broad at its junction with the Ussuri. The town is situated on a hill overlooking the river, and the statue of Count Mouravieff,



THE AMUR RIVER.

the first Governor-General, stands on the highest point, commanding a view of the country for miles around. The weather was fine, but great was our anxiety as we parted from our obliging captain in search of the



A SUMMER RESIDENCE (BANKS OF THE AMUR).

railway station. In the event of our missing the ordinary train, I had telegraphed from Blagovestchensk for a special, but on my inquiry at the station, close to the pier, the answer was that no orders whatever had been given. I learnt, however, that there was a large railway station the other side of the town, about three

miles off, a line connecting the two. My wife, Little-dale, and I started anxiously in search of a cab, which we happened to find, and drove to the main station through clouds of dust. The station-master informed



A WINTER DWELLING (BANKS OF THE AMUR).

us that he had no instructions with regard to us; that a special train could not be ready for us before midnight, that it would consist of a couple of luggage vans only, travelling at a rate of twenty-five versts an hour (slower than the usual train), and finally that the price would be two roubles per verst, the whole distance

being over 700 versts! This bit of news was not encouraging. Moreover, he said, the ordinary train was to start on the following morning (June 13) at



MONUMENT TO COUNT MURAVIEFF AT KHABAROVSK.

eight a.m., and was due at Vladivostok on the 14th at two p.m., but it was frequently several hours late. We naturally declined his proposal concerning the

special, and decided to run the risk of the daily train, which was to bring us to our destination three hours before our boat was to start for Kamchatka. We



A COREAN ON THE USSURI RAILWAY.

were running it uncommonly close, and were already discussing what we should do in the event of our missing it. The rest of the day was spent visiting the town, situated on rolling ground, which implied constant up and down hill work for the wretched

horse. The streets are broad, and the houses mostly low and wooden. A few brick buildings stood at the top of the hill, viz. the Government House and the Natural History Museum, which we visited. We were struck by the number of Chinamen and Coreans, outnumbering the Russian population, which consists chiefly of former convicts. Our cabman, a Caucasian by birth, did not seem in the least embarrassed in giving us an account of his experiences on the Island of Sakhalin, where he had stayed over three years. He had been condemned to ten years' hard labour for having, in a drunken state, stabbed two of his countrymen, and his sentence had been mitigated owing to his good conduct. He still had four more years to serve at Khabarovsk, where he settled down as a cab-driver, before being allowed to return to his home in the Caucasus, where his wife and child awaited him.

We slept that night on board the launch, and started next morning at eight a.m. by the passenger train. The line runs parallel to the Ussuri River, in a southeasterly direction. Strange types of natives crowded the stations. The country was low and undulated on either side, exceedingly wooded, and covered with dense underwood vegetation. Tigers are said to swarm in the Ussuri district, and, as I was told, had given great trouble during the construction of the

line, carrying off cattle and frequently children. The temperature was quite warm. A restaurant-car was attached to the train. Tallent was busy with his camera, taking numerous snapshots at the natives



COREAN TYPES, USSURI RAILWAY.

during the halts. Next morning we found, to our great joy, that our train was not late; at noon we reached an arm of the sea, and at two p.m. Vladivostok, after twenty-seven days' journey from St. Petersburg.

CHAPTER III.

Arrival at Vladivostok—Government House—Sable skins—Engage a Chinese cook— On board the *Baikal*—The island of Askold—Yesso and the Straits of Tsugar—Hakodadi Harbour—Our fellow-travellers—The Tchukchi tribe—Strange marriage customs—Vendetta—Reindeer—Report of wild sheep in Northern Siberia—Esquimaux dogs and their drivers—Report of wild sheep on the Ganál Range—Whales seen off the Kuriles—Russian whaling in the Sea of Okhotsk—Rarity of the sperm whale—A North Pacific fog—Capture of a tufted auk—Off Cape Lopatka—Southern Kamchatka—The entrance to Avatcha Bay—Koriatska volcano—Arrival in Petropavlovsk Harbour—The Ispravnik, chief of the district—Government House—Taxes—The price of furs.

OUR first inquiry at the station, on our arrival at Vladivostok, was naturally about the Kamchatka steamer. We learnt that the ship was to start on the same day at five p.m., giving us three hours to make the necessary preparations and purchase stores. Leaving Cristo and Tallent to look after our baggage and have it carted on board, we drove to Kunst and Albers' shop in order to get supplies. There again we found the same rival firms, as at Blagovestchensk. Having bought potatoes, flour, cooking utensils, and other odds and ends, we paid a visit to the Governor's wife,

Madame Tchichagoff, who received us very kindly; her husband was away inspecting his district. A substantial tea was served, and upon our objection that we had but a few minutes to spare, she retorted



OUR BAGGAGE AND PORTERS AT VLADIVOSTOK.

that the steamer would wait. Vladivostok is a picturesque town with a first-rate natural harbour, enclosed by two peninsulas, sheltering the inner waters, and forming a doorway which leads to the open sea. Several islands lay outside the harbour, which is sufficiently deep for the largest ocean

steamers. Unfortunately, though Vladivostok lies in the same latitude as Venice, the port, owing to the severe climate, is frozen from the middle of December to the end of March, and all traffic is suspended for



OUR PORTERS AT VLADIVOSTOK.

over three months of the year. The streets are uneven, and, if anything, more dusty than at Khabarovsk. The population consists chiefly of the Russian garrison, and of over 14,000 Chinese and Korean tradesmen and coolies. Leaving my wife at the

Government House, I hurried with Littledale to Messrs. Crompton and Schwabe's office. Mr. Schwabe, to whom we were so much indebted for all the information concerning our steamer, was away in the



VLADIVOSTOK HARBOUR.

northern seas on a fur errand. His clerk showed us several hundreds of sable skins, which had recently been brought in for sale by a wealthy Yakout merchant. They are usually sold in lots of ten where two or three lower-class skins are invariably mixed up with the better ones, and a general price is agreed

for. Here we picked up the faithful "Gabriel," who, since our Mongolian trip, had been in Mr. Schwabe's service, and who was now to accompany Littledale to Kamchatka. We managed to secure, in a few minutes' time, the services of a Chinese cook, whom we immediately despatched on board. At the military staff office we made a fruitless attempt to get a map of Kamchatka, and at 4.45 p.m. embarked on the s.s. *Baikal*, a screw steamer of 1,100 tons, belonging to the Russo-Chinese Railway Company. The harbour was crowded with steamers and fishing smacks of every description. There lay, awaiting Mr. Isvolsky, the Russian Pacific Squadron first-class cruiser *Rurik*, which was to convey the minister to Japan. My wife, accompanied by Madame Tchichagoff, was already on the pier, and our luggage safely on board. At 5.30 p.m. we bade farewell to our still bewildered hostess, who could not comprehend our sporting aspirations, and weighed anchor for the distant northern peninsula. Our captain, a sturdy mariner, courteously gave up to us his own cabin, which was larger and more comfortable than the others, and promised us that, if fogs did not delay the ship, she would carry us in eight days to Petropavlovsk, her average speed being ten knots an hour. He intended to avoid crossing the Sea of Okhotsk, where dense fogs constantly prevail at that

time of year, and to steer for the Straits of Tsugar, between the islands of Yesso and Nipon; thence to proceed some hundred miles east of the Kuriles, taking advantage of the "Kurosivo," a warm current running northwards as far as Kamchatka. This course, he said, was somewhat longer than the one through La Pérouse Straits, but infinitely preferable in every way. According to his reckoning, we were due at Avatcha Bay on the 22nd of June, the distance being 1,500 miles over the route he had chosen. The view of Vladivostok town and harbour was of unsurpassed magnificence as we steamed out among the islands at its entrance. The rays of the setting sun outlined the hills which shelter the town, lying in a semicircle at their foot, and the picture gradually faded away in a dark blue haze. The sea was perfectly smooth till we passed, at ten p.m., off the island of Askold. I learnt that this island swarmed with "izubra" stags, and a species of Sika (*Cervus sika manchuricus*), and that Vladivostok sportsmen, who had formed a shooting club, drive parts of the woods, killing a great number of animals every year. During the night the breeze gradually freshened, and in the morning our ship was rolling heavily over high seas. A strong north-westerly wind blew the whole day, gradually increasing to a regular gale.

The *Baikal*, heavily laden as she was with Government stores, such as flour and sugar, for the inhabitants of Kamchatka, was fairly steady, but speed had to be slackened to four knots in order to prevent the huge waves from submerging her entirely, and last, not least, she was obliged to alter her course to windward. We were mercilessly tossed about the whole day as well as the following night, sleep being out of question on account of the rattling of the screw, constantly out of water.

On the morning of June 16 we were still toiling across the Sea of Japan, having gone but 150 miles in thirty-six hours. Our cabin was under two inches of water, which had leaked from below or dashed through the portholes occasionally opened for fresh air. Dressing and wading across the cabin floor was no pleasant occupation. My wife preferred to remain in bed, while I partook of the scanty breakfast, served by dirty Chinese boys, in the company of two or three passengers who stoically faced the storm. On the following day the wind gradually fell, and although the sea was still "rocky," we were able to resume our course; towards evening, as we caught sight of the first islands of Yesso, we entered perfectly smooth water. It was a beautiful evening and a strange contrast with the previous days, as we neared the mountainous coasts of

Yesso and approached the Straits of Tsugar. The sea of a deep dark blue rippled quietly around the ship, and several islands on either side rose out of it and stood against the sky like huge sugar-loaves. At six p.m. we entered the straits, and could distinctly make out with our glasses the large fishing village of



PASSING JAPAN.

Matzmaï, picturesquely situated at the foot of the hills. Several Japanese steamers and junks were sighted in the distance, and we were presently overtaken by the *Rurik* conveying M. Isvolsky to Yokohama. She had started from Vladivostok twenty hours after we left, and overtook us in no time. We all stood on deck, watching her pitch in the heavy ocean swell that

rose at the further side of the straits, like a well-bred horse covered with foam. Hearty salutes were exchanged, and the snow-white apparition was soon but a spot on the horizon. Tide *versus* current had produced a strong swell of unbreaking waves, making us feel quite uncomfortable again. But the captain said that the glass was high, and promised a smooth journey for the morrow. In the meanwhile we passed off Hakodadi Harbour, the town being hidden from view. It is the capital of Yesso and an important Japanese commercial centre. We were told that Japanese steamers run twice every summer from this place to Petropavlovsk. As we were greatly embarrassed on the subject of our return journey from Kamchatka, the *Baikal* having to call on her way back at several ports of the Sea of Okhotsk, such as Gigigà, Ola, Ayàn, and others, and employing a whole month for the cruise, we thought it possible to avail ourselves of one of these two Japanese ships to convey us back to civilisation. As it happened we never saw either of them. Having on our left the Hakodadi lighthouse, we entered the open Pacific towards evening, and steering round the southeastern promontory of Yesso, took a northerly direction.

That night at supper, for the first time, all the passengers gathered round the table, and the fiddles had disappeared. We naturally made closer acquaintance

with our fellow-travellers. These consisted of a Russian dealer, who was returning to his home in the interior of Kamchatka, a village called Milkovo; a former schoolmaster, now on a gold-prospecting errand; and a member of the Russian Geographical Society with his wife, going to Anadyr on a joint Russo-American mission with the object of studying the customs and language of the Tchukchis and other Esquimaux tribes inhabiting the furthestmost north, where he intended to remain a couple of years. The last-named proved to be a most interesting and instructive companion. Doctor Bogoraz was a specialist on polar ethnography. During our long leisure hours on board and at dinner he used to relate to us, with the striking vividness of an eye-witness, his wonderful experiences of life in the Far North, and the customs and ways of Arctic tribes. The most attractive one, he said, was undoubtedly the Tchukchi tribe, which he considered to belong to the Indian race of the American continent. He had formed this opinion from the fact that their language, stature, and other features strongly resembled those of their kinsmen on the opposite side of the Behring Straits. A friend of his was sent at the same time by the Russo-American joint commission to Point Barrow, with the same scientific object.

The customs of the Tchukchis surpass human conception and rank them among the very lowest types of civilisation, not excluding even cannibals. They inhabit the barren northernmost wastes of Asia in wicker huts covered with reindeer hide, and dress in sealskins. Herds of tame reindeer are their only property, and their chief occupation is hunting and fishing. They are a sturdy race.* Generally tall and well bred, they lead a nomad life, wandering every year over great tracts of country principally along the coast of the North Pacific and Arctic Oceans. Their food consists entirely of fish and reindeer; of the latter they eat up everything save the skin and bones. Doctor Bogoraz told us that some of their customs were beyond human comprehension. They are pagans, and it happens frequently that, under the supernatural influence of one of their *shamans*, or priests, a Tchukchi lad of sixteen years will suddenly relinquish his sex and imagine himself to be a woman. He adopts a woman's attire, lets his hair grow, and devotes himself altogether to female occupation. Furthermore, this disowner of his sex takes a husband into the *yurt* and does all the work which is

* A proof of their stubbornness and courage was their long resistance to Russian occupation. It was the Tchukchi tribe that gave the invading Cossacks most trouble.

usually incumbent on the wife in most unnatural and voluntary subjection. Thus it frequently happens in a *yurt* that the husband is a woman, while the wife is a man! These abnormal changes of sex imply the most abject immorality in the community, and appear to be strongly encouraged by the *shamans*, who interpret such cases as an injunction of their individual deity. Our companion had stayed several days in a *yurt* where the he-wife was a tall, good-looking young man with thick moustaches, while the she-husband was a small, middle-aged woman. The former, with long hair, wore a woman's dress, and sat bashfully in a corner of the tent stitching a couple of reindeer skins! Another time he had witnessed the following combination. A widow with two children joined the stronger sex and married a young Tchukchi girl; further posterity being impossible, a so-called "spare husband," a man this time, was introduced into the *yurt*. The children which were born were considered as her own, and the family, consisting of a female husband, two children from her deceased husband, her wife and children from the "spare husband," lived together in perfect harmony! Professor Bogoraz added that this change of sex usually implied future priesthood, and that almost all the *shamans* were former delinquents of their sex, and greatly feared by their tribesmen.

He had spent three years in the Kolymsk district of Northern Siberia, and while living in the settlement of Nijni-Kolymsk had been in a position to notice the disastrous influence of native Tchukchis on the Russian population. The same lack of morals, with the exception of pagan superstition, reigned in the town. Community of wives, drunkenness, and general lawlessness had grown to such an extent in this place, cut off from communication with the rest of the world, that the greatest anomalies had become quite natural in the eyes of those unfortunate outlaws, and no attempt was made to conceal indiscriminate passion. Illegal intercourse between Russians and natives was no less frequent ; a current proverb confirming these views, "A woman is no pear ; she cannot be swallowed by a single person."

It must be remembered that Nijni-Kolymsk lies at the mouth of the Kolyma river, some 2,000 miles north-east of Yakutsk, that steamers do not call there every year, and that life in such conditions may drive anyone mad. The town itself consists of a hundred or more low wooden huts with two or three Government buildings, a church, and a hospital. In the centre of the settlement, said our companion, there was a dense wood, through which it was uncommonly difficult to find one's way, and the houses

lay scattered about in every direction. During his stay a doctor had been despatched by the Government to investigate scurvy, the principal local disease, and this gentleman had given some offence to his colleague; whereupon the latter, with the aid of two or three friends, proceeded to confine the wretched new-comer in his room, by icing up the door and windows, and leaving him to his unhappy fate. He was almost starved to death. Vendetta is a common feature to all Tchukchis, and an insult is never forgiven. Doctor Bogoraz had personally seen the spot where the wife and daughter of an offender had been carried off by the relatives of the offended party some thirty miles away in the woods, and left there. The mother was found dead with a piece of her daughter's flesh in her clenched hand. The more aged Tchukchis, who are unable to work—useless mouths—are usually done away with—throttled by their children or relations with thongs of reindeer hide. Thus reindeer clothe them, shelter them, nourish them, and finally kill them! When bargaining, they count with their fingers, and if the number wanted passes the limit of ten, they catch hold of someone else's hand, and so on. Tchukchis milk the reindeer hinds by sucking the udder and spitting out its contents into reindeer bladders. The milk thus obtained is exceedingly thick,

much thicker than cow's milk, and rich in cream, but the quantity is small, an average hind yielding not more than a couple of glassfuls a day. They spend four months of the year in darkness, and sparingly light their lamps, which consist of a small bowl filled with seal oil and a taper. One of their favourite dainties is a lump of reindeer fat dipped in the oil as a sauce.

Having mentioned to Doctor Bogoraz that we were on a sporting trip after Kamchatka bighorn, he informed us that he had come across wild sheep in the Verkho-Yansk range of Northern Siberia. These hills were situated about 600 versts (400 miles) north-east of Yakutsk. Their coat, he said, was light, and their horns comparatively small. He had also found a species of *Ovis* differing from the former, as he thought, inhabiting mountains running along the Arctic Ocean east of Kolymsk; these in every way resembled the Kamchatkan kind. I had every reason to believe his assertions, and am inclined to think that the Verkho-Yansk sheep may be an undescribed species.

On the subject of sledge-dogs our friend's narratives were highly interesting. Reindeer and dogs with the Esquimaux take the place of horses. It requires the utmost skill and great experience to

keep the dogs under control. They are driven in teams of twelve or more, being attached to the sledge one in front of the other, and sometimes in pairs. The driver has no reins to guide them; this he does by means of his voice, to whose different intonations the leading dog, generally the cleverest of the team, is perfectly accustomed, and hardly ever mistakes right or left. Sledge-dogs never go at a walking pace; the difficulty consists in starting them all at the same moment. As soon as they are on the move, they follow each other at a sharp trot, and can go for many miles without stopping, rendering this means of locomotion a very fast one. The driver invariably carries an *ostog*, or iron-shod stick, which he uses for halting, fixing it firmly into the ground. If one of the dogs becomes troublesome in any way, the *ostog* is hurled at him, the sharp point of the stick never missing its aim, and is picked up again at full speed. Sledge-dogs are fed entirely on fish, but they prefer reindeer meat. If by chance a native happens to be driving reindeer in front, and the dogs get their wind, they will start off at a frantic gallop, and catching up the reindeer, will tear them to pieces like a famished pack of wolves. It is then almost impossible to stop them. At other times, when passing a *yurt* where a reindeer has just been gralloched, they will dash aside and in

no time devour the offal, only resuming their journey when the last morsel has been licked up. In such cases the driver is helpless. It frequently occurs that two teams meet, and if one of them is not turned well aside beforehand, the dogs will rush at each other in wild confusion, and a general *mêlée* takes place; they all get entangled in the harness, one on the top of the other, the drivers' efforts to separate them being of no avail, and the scrimmage generally ends in bloodshed. A good team of dogs is worth over 200 roubles (£20), and, if well managed, can easily do 100 versts (70 miles) in twenty-four hours.

Our other companion, a Yakout tradesman, who had settled down in Kamchatka, on being questioned as to the interior of the country, informed us that we should be able to find six or eight ponies at Petropavlovsk, and that there was but one possible route, leading to the valley of the Kamchatka River, and following the whole length of the peninsula in a northerly direction down to Nijni-Kamchatsk. He said there were several small settlements by the rivers, inhabited by Kamchadale fishermen, and that the largest village was Milkovo, where he had taken up his abode. He invited us to stay at his house, saying that he had heard of the existence of wild sheep on the higher range of Ganál as well as further

north round Tolbachinsky volcano (11,000 feet). His indications, however, were too vague to be of service to us. He spoke of the wild rejoicings of the Petropavlovsk population when the steamer is sighted by them in Avatcha Bay. The whining of the dogs along the beach, and the shouts and cheers of the boys, could be heard on board ship at a distance of several miles. This excitement is to be accounted for by the scarcity of steamers and the expected arrival of Government supplies for the whole year. As it was, we learnt later that the wretched inhabitants had run out of last year's provisions, having been reduced to tea without sugar, and that fish had replaced bread.

On the 18th of June we were steadily advancing over a smooth sea, some sixty miles east of the first Kuriles. Although we were supposed to be in the warm Kuro-sivo current, the temperature was cold, and there was no land in sight. On the rippling surface of the ocean great numbers of whales spouted around us. One of the mates related his six years' experiences on a whaler in the Sea of Okhotsk. For years these seas had been scoured by American whalers, and entirely monopolised by them, when an enterprising Russian naval officer, Count Kaiserling, succeeded in obtaining this important monopoly from his Government, together with a concurrent prohibition for foreigners. He had

fitted out several ships, one of which had been entrusted to the first mate of the *Baikal*. But such were the hardships and dangers encountered from frequent storms during the winter months, that my informant had given up the task for a more comfortable berth.



A WHALER.

Nevertheless, he said, whaling was a fine sport, and many a whale had been harpooned by him and towed alongside his ship. The harpoon which he used was fired from a gun, with a dynamite shell attached to it, which exploded in the whale's body. Sperm whales were very uncommon, most of those met with being of a smaller kind.

The following day we entered a dense fog, and although a fresh southerly breeze blew steadily, it hardly ever lifted for three days till we were within a few miles of Avatcha Bay. Now and then it would creep away stealthily, allowing us a few hundred yards' view; at other times it would hang around the ship and prevent us from recognising each other on board. Our captain told us that these fogs are characteristic of the Northern Pacific and Okhotsk seas, and sometimes last a fortnight or more during the summer months. Besides endangering navigation, it renders the journey monotonous and uninteresting. No observations could be taken, and the sextant remained idle in its case. The log and direction were the only means of fixing our position, and that only approximately, the speed of the current being undetermined. The dull sound of the foghorn occasionally broke the silence of those lonely seas. According to the log we were advancing at the rate of thirty-eight knots every four hours. In this murky atmosphere we spent three long days.

On the 21st a tufted auk (*Simorhynchus cristatellus*, Pallas) was caught on board, indicating the proximity of land. Our captain said that we had passed the last of the Kuriles, and that the ship was presumably off Cape Lopatka, the southernmost point of Kamchatka.

My friend the first mate told me that last year two fishermen had been landed on one of the Kuriles by an American schooner to catch the sea-otters, but that the ship had never returned to call for them. They had to remain all the winter on that uninhabited island, and could only get food provided they were up in the morning before the crows! They built a small boat, and making their way from one island to another, eventually managed to reach Kamchatka after a year's absence.

On the following morning, June 22, we found that the fog was as dense as ever. Numbers of sea birds hovered above the steamer—an evident sign that land was not far off. The foghorn was at work every three minutes, and our skipper said that if the mist did not lift we should be obliged to keep away from the land and not attempt to get into Avatcha Bay, in consequence of the numerous reefs at the entrance. According to his calculations, we should be off the lighthouse at five p.m. He ordered soundings to be taken, which gave a depth of eighty fathoms. Fortunately, soon after five the mist broke up in places, and land was sighted about ten miles to the west. As Dr. Guille-mard expresses it: "We emerged from the fog much as a train runs out of a tunnel, and found that Kamchatka was in view." The mist, however, still hung

over us, preventing us from seeing the higher ground. We could only perceive the narrow horizontal stretch of our promised land extending between the grey line of fog and the sea. Presently, as we advanced with the utmost caution, the captain recognised the entrance of the bay.



ROCKS AT THE ENTRANCE OF AVATCHA BAY.

We could now admire the entire coast-line, with its deep parallel valleys, intercepted by perpendicular cliffs and craggy promontories, running down into the sea. The bottom of the gullies was still filled with snow, whilst patches of grass on the slopes afforded fine pasture grounds. An hour later we

steamed slowly into the inner waters. Huge rocks, swarming with gulls, puffins, cormorants, and ducks of every kind nesting on their ledges or in their cavities, stood out on either side of the entrance of the bay. A deafening noise produced by those millions of birds, jabbering in their unknown dialect, greeted our arrival. With regard to the scenery we had before us, I can do no better than borrow Dr. Guillemard's masterly description: "After having passed the precipitous cliffs of the coast, at the foot of which none but a bird could land, its deep valleys running down to the sea, at whose mouths still lay the accumulated masses of last winter's snows; pinnacle rocks like rows of iron teeth shown to warn off anyone rash enough to contemplate a landing; and the country beyond, rising in abrupt humps and irregular masses, clothed with a uniform growth of low but dense underwood, above which the distant cones of snow stood out clear and hard against the sky."

We shaped our course over smooth sea through the narrow entrance of Avatcha Bay. "The latter is one of the finest harbours in the world," says Dr. Guillemard,* "if not actually the finest." Rio and Sydney harbours have no mean claims for this position of honour, but those of us who had seen

* *Cruise of the "Marchesa,"* vol. i. pp. 68, 69.

both were unanimous in awarding the palm to their Kamchatkan rival. A nearly circular basin of some nine miles in diameter, and with a narrow entrance opening to the S.S.E., it is roomy enough to accommodate the navies of the world. It is entirely



THE ENTRANCE TO AVATCHA BAY.

free from dangers, has an even depth of ten or twelve fathoms, and owing to its affording excellent holding ground, and being well protected from all winds, it is perfectly safe in all weathers. But the ordinary traveller will be struck, not so much with its nautical excellences as with the superb scenery with which it is surrounded. To the south rises the Vilutchinsky

volcano, now quiescent, a graceful cone of about 7,000 feet; and a little farther eastwards a huge flat-topped mass, exceeding it in height by a thousand feet or more, obtrudes itself as a rare exception to the rule of cone-shaped mountains which seems to obtain throughout the country. It is nameless in the charts, for we are in the land of volcanoes, and it is only 8,000 feet in height. On either hand, on entering, are the two secondary harbours, Rakova and Tareinska—the latter nearly five miles in length—and within them again are others on a still smaller scale.

Nature here has treated the mariner right royally. The ironbound coast without may be as bad a lee shore as any skipper wishes to see, and the Pacific Ocean may too often belie its name, but here one can rest quietly, and sleep *sur les deux oreilles* until such time the anchor is weighed for the homeward voyage. But if the southern part of the bay is fine, it is difficult to find words to describe the beauty of its upper portion. We look north, and the scenery on which we have just turned our backs is forgotten, for there, shoulder to shoulder, their vast fields of snow glittering in the sun, stand a trio of volcanoes such as one rarely sees. From the summit of Avatchinska, the central peak, a delicate streamer of white vapour floats out horizontally, sharply defined against the

blue of the clear northern sky. So closely do these mountains seem to hedge in the bay that it is hard to realise the fact that they are twenty miles distant. But in Kamchatka the scenery is on a large scale, and a reference to the chart explains the matter in five figures—the height of Koriatska is 11,554 feet.

It was close on seven p.m. when Petropavlovsk Harbour came in sight, hidden, as it was, from view by low, undulating hills on all sides but one, a long wooded promontory called the "Signalny Myss," or Signal Cape, sheltering it from the west. At the same time we discovered the village huts scattered along the beach, and an unusual concert of howling dogs, together with the joyful shrieks of the inhabitants, reached our ears. There was no slight reason for these rejoicings, for the *Baikal* represented the much longed-for commissariat, and the first of the two annual steamers, due at Petropavlovsk on the 1st of May, had not made its appearance that year, depriving the starved population of its necessary supplies, which were almost two months overdue. A few minutes later we were anchored off the settlement. The harbour is quite a tiny one, divided in two by a narrow strip of land, leaving but a small entrance into the inner part, which is of no depth; larger steamers have to remain outside. To our astonishment, three

other ships lay in the harbour. One of them was a Russian steamer of the Imperial Navy, the *Yakut*, bound for Providence Bay, in order to keep off the American prospectors from intruding on the newly discovered gold fields, and come to the rescue of a



THE INNER HARBOUR, PETROPAVLOVSK.

recently fitted out Russian mining expedition. Another was the s.s. *Albatross*, an American ship on a scientific mission; the third one being a small schooner, the *Storoi*, belonging to the Russian Seal Fisheries Co., and formerly confiscated from its American owners for unlawful otter-hunting along the coasts of Kam-

chatka. Such a fleet had never been witnessed in Petropavlovsk Harbour since its defence, in 1854, against the combined Anglo-French attack on the town.

Great animation soon reigned on board the *Baikal*, where the local authorities, the captain of the



THE S.S. "BAIKAL" IN PETROPAVLOVSK BAY.

Yakut, and several others, gathered for news. Strange to say, in this remote corner of the world, the chief inquiries made were on the subject of the Transvaal War! The *Ispravnik*, who here rejoices in the exceptional title of "Natchalnik Oblasti," or Chief of the District (*ispravniks* are usually at the head of the district police), together with his lieutenant,

were two stately-looking gentlemen, by no means of the lean kind, and appeared in strange contradiction to their statements that the village had been starving for the last month, there being no longer a bag of flour or a pound of sugar to be obtained throughout the peninsula. They resembled each other like brothers, and I was constantly at a loss to make out which was which. I was told that these starving periods were not unfrequent in Kamchatka, and that they afforded a capital season to the one or two tradesmen of the country, who keep back a certain quantity of supplies of first necessity; the natives fall entirely into their hands, and sable skins are exchanged for a few ounces of sugar or two or three handfuls of flour. I think it is the duty of every well-meaning person to lay a stress on these lawless exactions, in order that the Government may take measures towards a more regular importation of stores. The Ispravnik has almost unlimited power over his district, which includes the whole of Kamchatka, and whose vast area and lack of means of communication render his task practically impossible. He is officially under the control of the Governor at Vladivostok, whose supervision is reduced to a minimum, and his local jurisdiction remains without appeal.

Such a state of affairs, if abandoned to undeserving

people, may lead to the most arbitrary proceedings, and endanger the prestige of the Government. I do not mean to hint that things were in such a position, but only that they might be so. As it happened, the Ispravnik seemed a good-natured person, and from what I gathered was quite popular among the Kamchadales. He informed us that last year measles, a formerly unknown disease in the country, had been brought in by some steamer, and had been ravaging the population ever since, killing over 800 natives. It was still raging among them in the northern parts of the peninsula with fatal results. If one considers that there are not more than 8,000 inhabitants in the whole district, it means that ten per cent. had been carried off; that illness, he said, was chiefly fatal to grown-up people, and was not so deadly to children. Lepers still existed in the country, and were isolated in a small settlement called Nikolaievsk, south of Avatcha Bay. They all lived together in their doomed enclosure, forgotten by the rest of the world, and abandoned by their families, who dared not approach them. He told us that last winter had been a very severe one, and that there had been unusually heavy snowfalls, traces of which could still be seen on the comparatively low hills. He did not seem to know much on the subject of sport, though he thought

wild sheep were plentiful all along the coast. The path into the interior was as yet impracticable, and he strongly advised us to wait, promising to muster a few ponies from different villages several miles distant in

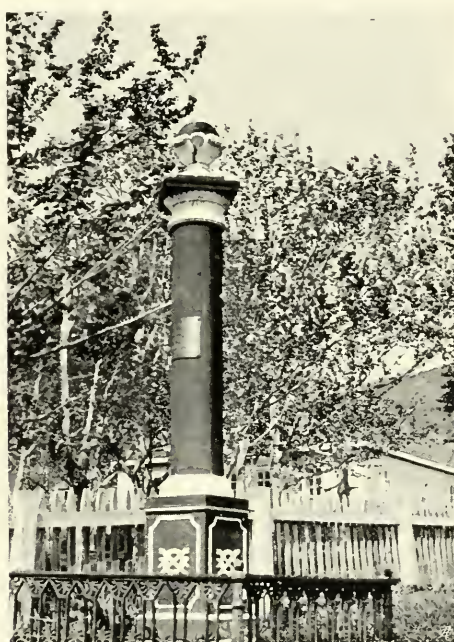


THE MAIN STREET, PETROPAVLOVSK.

due time, and to send us a couple of native hunters on the following day.

That night we slept soundly on board, the first quiet one after many a night's shaking or tossing. Next morning mist prevented us from catching a glimpse of the loftier peaks; patches of snow lay

everywhere, almost down to sea-level. We went on shore to visit the town. The hamlet consists of some eighty wooden huts, of which a dozen, including the Ispravnik's residence, show the com-



MONUMENT TO BEHRING (PETROPAVLOVSK).

parative ease of their owners. The main street runs unevenly parallel to the shore; a few wooden planks obviate the necessity for wading through the mud. It is adorned by the presence of two storehouses, one of them belonging to the Russian Seal

Fisheries Co. (formerly the Alaska Commercial Co.), the other being that of a wealthy tradesman, Rousanoff by name, who had spent over thirty years in Kamchatka, and had accumulated a large fortune by a steady exchange of penny articles for costly



CROSS ON THE GRAVE OF RUSSIANS KILLED IN ACTION
AUGUST, 1854.

sable or blue fox skins. At the head of the street stands the summer church with its blue painted top, whilst opposite is the winter church, a low earthen building, which can be heated during the long cold months. In the churchyard stands a monument to Behring, above his grave, and a little further, enclosed

by an iron railing, are the three crosses erected to the memory of the Russians, English, and French who were killed in action at the siege of Petropavlovsk in 1854. The following are the inscriptions :—

Russian Cross.—"To the memory of the fallen at the repulse of the attack of the Anglo-French, August 24th, 1854. Peace to your remains."

English Cross.—"In memory of the officers, seamen, and marines killed in action, August, 1854, at Petropaulski. H.B.M.S. *Egeria*, 1877."

French Cross.—"A la mémoire des marins français tués au combat de Petropaulowski, le 24 Août, 1854," and on the tombstone : "A la mémoire de MM. Armand Lefèvre Bourasset, Lieut. de V^{au}, Charles Gicquel des Touches, Enseigne, et des marins de la Forte, de *l'Eurydice* et de *l'Obligado*, décédés le 4 7^{bre} 1854. Priez pour eux !"



CROSSES ON THE GRAVES OF THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH
KILLED IN ACTION, AUGUST, 1854.

The calamities of war had not even spared this distant corner of the globe ; the storms and breakers of these remote northern seas had sounded the death-knell of many a daring explorer, such as Behring and



MONUMENT TO LA PÉROUSE (PETROPAVLOVSK).

La Pérouse ! To the left ran the wooded Signal promontory, with a small gap in its centre overlooking the waters of the bay ; close to it stands a memorial stone to La Pérouse in the shape of a rough piece of granite, with an iron chain and anchor attached to it.

On the sandspit, which divides the small harbour, stands a black-painted obelisk-shaped stone monument, surmounted with a cross and star, erected in 1881, in memory of the affair of August, 1854. Such are the ornaments of Petropavlovsk, all of them con-



THE CRIMEAN MONUMENT AT PETROPAVLOVSK.

secrations to bravery and pluck. Nor should I forget to mention the comparatively large Government House, and close to it the building in which the annual supplies are stored, both painted a dull brick-red. Provisions are either sold to the natives, or exchanged for sable or other skins they may bring in, at market

price. Each man's account is carefully kept in the books, and if his debit outweighs his credit, the result of his winter chase must restore the balance in his favour before fresh supplies are given out. Government taxes, or *yassak*, are likewise paid in this manner. Two or three fur dealers, besides the Seal Fisheries Co., compete in spring at the Government auction rooms; all the collected furs are thus disposed of by the Ispravnik. At the time of our visit the price of sables varied from twenty to a hundred roubles (£2 to £10), blue fox fetched more, while sea-otter attained the highest figures, reaching £100 a skin. The latter are supposed to be preserved by the Government, which limits the yearly catch to fourteen. The best sea-otter fisheries are situated off Cape Lopatka, round the southernmost extremity of the peninsula, where their favourite seaweeds abound. A party of native hunters starts down the coasts every year in a couple of small boats, involving no slight courage to face the ocean in the autumn months with such a fragile equipment. They are often never heard of again. At other times they bring back their well-earned booty, consisting of ten or twelve skins, half of which they share amongst themselves, the other half being Government property. It remains a mystery to me how European markets can still be



PETROPAVLOVSK FROM THE SANDSPIT.

so prodigally supplied with sea-otters, when one of their principal haunts yields but fourteen skins annually at the utmost. We learnt from a clerk of the Seal Fisheries stores that the entire population of Petropavlovsk had been on foot that winter for



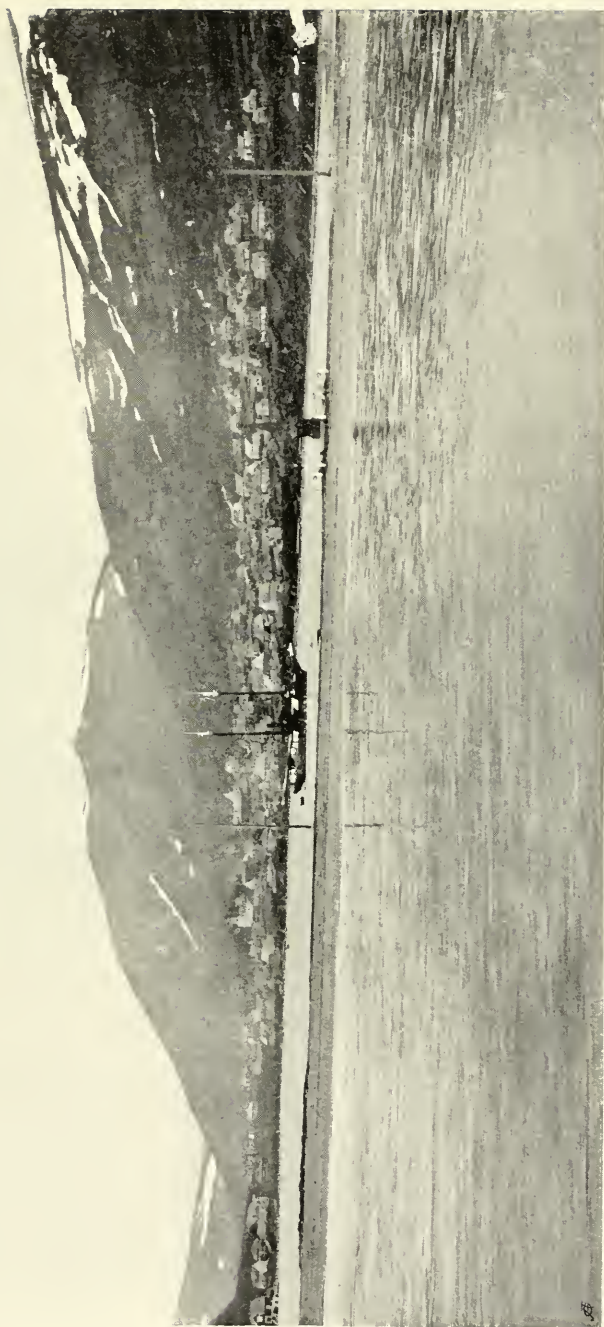
SIDE VIEW OF PETROPAVLOVSK.

more than two months, with all the "Winchesters" and cartridges that could be mustered in the place, in pursuit of a couple of blue foxes which had taken up their abode in the proximity of the village, but that all attempts to secure them had proved fruitless.

The shop of the Company seemed to us fairly well

provided with utensils of every kind, and canned meats and fruit, mostly of American produce; before starting for the interior we took in a large supply of tinned fruit, which turned out a great success. At the back of the hamlet there is a small hospital; we made the doctor's acquaintance on our return journey. He was one of the successors of the well-known Dr. Dybovsky, who had lived many years in this inhospitable country. Dr. Dybovsky, a naturalist of world-wide fame, had been formerly imprisoned in Siberia for joining in the Polish rebellion of 1864, and having served his time, had been sent to Kamchatka as Government doctor. He had done a great deal towards relieving the natives and prosecuting scientific research in the peninsula, and his name was still mentioned by everyone with the greatest respect and everlasting gratitude. There is one doctor for the whole district, and winter being the only available time for travelling, he has to visit all the villages distributing medicine, his patients requiring immediate recovery, for he cannot return to them before a year has elapsed.

That day we met one of the native hunters, from whom we obtained more precise information concerning wild sheep. He knew but little of the interior, where, he said, it was practically impossible to penetrate as yet owing to the quantity of snow lying on



VIEW OF PETROJAJLOVSK, SHOWING SANDPIT AND CRIMEAN MONUMENT.

the passes, and more so on account of the rivers, which are unfordable in June. He prompted us to give up, for the present, our intended expedition to the Ganál Range (about 200 versts inland), and



SOUTH PART OF PETROPAVLOVSK VILLAGE.

to try the ground he was well acquainted with along the coast either north of Avatcha Bay, where he had frequently hunted over the Shipounsky promontory, or down the numerous inlets to the south, such as the Vilutcha, Povorotnaïa, Asatcha, and others in the direction of Cape Lopatka. Sheep, he

said, were to be found all along the coast, on the slopes of the valleys running down into the sea. As for the central hills, he was not convinced of the existence of sheep in those parts. He added that the best way of reaching the ground was to hire ordinary fishing-boats, or *shliupki*, and sail out of the bay in any direction, two or three days being sufficient to reach the more likely haunts. At night our tents could be pitched on the beach, and the valley carefully spied during the day. In the event of not finding game, our camp could be easily lifted, the next valley inspected, and so on. Bears were plentiful, he said, as well as reindeer. Unfortunately, though prospects looked extremely promising, the realisation of these plans soon proved impracticable. We decided on the spur of the moment to follow his advice, and settle matters in the presence of the Ispravnik, who had managed, in the meanwhile, to secure another hunter, Koriakine by name, to whose untiring energy we were subsequently indebted for our success.

CHAPTER IV.

A Kamchatkan hunter—Bear skins and sables—Mode of hunting the sable—Market value of the fur—A hunter frozen to death—Wild sheep in Asatcha Bay—Preparations for a start—High prices at the stores—A Chinese *chef*—Salmon and sea-trout—Other fishes of Kamchatka—Japanese fish-poachers—Netting the rivers—Volcanoes of Koriak and Avatchinsky—Many bear skins—Large numbers exported to America—Curious antlers of caribou—Pallas's sea-eagle—Hauling the nets—Embark on board the *Storozh*—Loss of our fourth boat—A team of sledge-dogs photographed—The ship's engine breaks down—Again in camp on the sandspit—A start for the Ganál Range—The harbour bar—Dug-out canoes for river-work—Ten miles in twelve hours—Reach Khutor—The natives described—Bargaining for ponies—A stampede—Deluge of rain—Capercaillie in the birch woods—Tracks of a bear—Swarm of mosquitoes—A wet and dry tundra—The Bolshaia River—Arrive at Natchiki.

MIKHAIL KORIAKINE, the future admiral of our ephemeral flotilla, and subsequently our *caravanbashi*, was a young hunter of undaunted energy and endless goodwill. He belonged to that set of half a dozen Petropavlovsk hunters who daily risk their lives after bear or sable, daringly facing ocean storms in their small fishing-smacks, or endure starvation and cold in the torments of snow during long arctic winters. Many a tale he told us of the hard-

ships his party had undergone while bear-hunting on the vast snowfields of Kamchatka. They would sail along the coast, and leaving their boat in some sheltered bay, push into the interior through unexplored wastes, with nothing but their rifles and ammunition ; they would remain months at a time in pursuit of game across unknown regions, suffering agony during intensely cold and sleepless nights, and frequently returning with eighty or a hundred bear skins, which they exchanged with American dealers for articles of prime necessity. They all carried Winchester rifles, and when they ran out of ammunition, American tradesmen refused to supply them with cartridges unless they took another rifle with a corresponding exchange, thus obliging them to throw away their old rifle. In fact, I was told that a common lamp-glass could not be obtained without acquiring a new lamp. This unusual mode of traffic had been imposed upon them by Americans, the sole purveyors to these northern tribes, who had helplessly to submit to these tyrannic exactions. Mikhaïl told us that sable skins were becoming very scarce on account of the great demand for them. An average skin fetched twenty-five roubles, and a good sable-hunting dog was most valuable. The dog tracks the animal to its abode under the roots of a tree or in some fissure of a rock ;



THE "ADMIRAL" AND VASSKA THE COOK.

a net is then placed at the entrance of the hole, and one may often remain days before the sable comes out and gets entangled in the net. Traps are also used, but with worse result. The Kamchatkan sable is of fine quality, dark and soft, with greyish tips to the fur. The very best skins are said to come from Ajàn and Udà, districts of the Okhotsk region, and frequently fetch £50 and more in the European markets. At present the Russian Government has taken measures towards the prohibition of sable-hunting in two districts of Kamchatka, with the view of preserving this costly animal. The country round the Kurile Lake in the south, and that round Lake Kronotsky, close to the eastern coast, have been selected for this purpose, but it is difficult to enforce regulations over these uninhabited and remote parts. I learnt that two or three years before, a Kamchatkan sable-hunter had been found frozen to death in the Kronotsky Lake district with over thirty sable skins—a fortune for him—lying at his side. Such are the vicissitudes of this lucrative sport! In the presence of the Ispravnik and his lieutenant an agreement was arrived at with our new friend Koriakine, with a view to hire boats at a rate of fifty roubles (£5) each for a month. The joint crews were to consist of a dozen men and four experienced hunters (including Koriakine), who were to

receive two roubles per day. The latter henceforth was to act as "admiral," a nickname which he kept to the end of our land journey. We decided to start on the next day but one, in order to give the Admiral time to furnish our imposing armada and find the necessary men. Our intentions were to sail out of the bay and steer down the coast towards Cape Lopatka, looking in at the numerous inlets as far as Asatcha (about eighty miles distant), where wild sheep were said to abound in the broken country in the interior. While on one of their bear-hunting expeditions, the men had seen several old rams in the neighbourhood of Asatcha, and the small bay, said Koriakine, was a well-sheltered one. Three or four days, provided we had a favourable wind, would convey us to the ground. Our first halt was to be in Vilutchá Bay, at the foot of that volcano; our second, in the small gulf beyond the massive promontory of Povorotny, in the proximity of which game was already to be found, though not so plentiful as round Asatcha. Cape Schipunsky, where Dr. Guillemard and his party had secured several *Ovis nivicola*, on the cliffs overlooking the sea, stood out some thirty miles north of Avatcha Bay, and had afforded good sport, but, according to the Admiral, that place had been too frequently visited by native hunters, and landing was extremely difficult

with its open and unsheltered bays. That day we called at the shops for different odds and ends. I was struck by the unusually high prices; we were charged fourteen roubles (£1 10s.) for a small copper kettle, and other trifles on a similar scale. Eggs are particularly dear—twenty kopecks (6*d.*) apiece—owing to the scarcity of hens, which have to be carefully protected against the omnivorous sledge-dogs! American articles, such as Californian canned fruit, come very cheap on account of their being free from duty, for Petropavlovsk indulges in the high-sounding title of a “free port.” Upon calling on Mr. Rousanoff, this elderly gentleman took us into his back shop and produced a large trunk filled with over two hundred sable skins of the finest quality; this was probably the result of many an advantageous exchange during the period of “starvation.” He told us that the price of this valuable fur had risen that year, and that Schwabe’s agent had purchased almost the whole Government stock a month before for £6 apiece, including good and bad skins. He asked us £8 for each of his, and declined to sell fewer than fifty skins. We thanked him for his generous proposal, and returned on board in order to make our preparations.

On the following morning we disembarked with all our belongings and pitched camp on the narrow tongue

of land which forms the natural breakwater of the harbour, a few yards from the monument of 1854. That night our Chinese *chef* cooked his first dinner, consisting mainly of boiled salmon and potatoes. Vasska, as we called him (the Russian corresponding to Johnnie), was a cheery little fellow, always ready to



OUR CAMP ON THE SANDSPIT (PETROPAVLOVSK).

help, and though his culinary qualifications were decidedly below the average, his constant willingness and unabated good humour rendered him a most useful companion. A magnificent salmon was brought into camp during the evening and purchased by us for a few kopecks. It certainly weighed between forty and fifty pounds. At that time of year (June) we were at the height of the *tchatycha* season.

The *tchavycha* (*Salmo orientalis*), the finest of the Salmonidæ, is proper to Kamchatkan waters and the Okhotsk Sea, and comes up in shoals to the mouths



A FORTY POUNDER.

of the rivers about the end of May, being the first fish to make its appearance; it seems closely akin to the European salmon, and attains enormous dimensions—eighty pounds, so I was told. Its flesh is of a pale red colour and its flavour quite excellent. Next come

the so-called *goltsi* (*Salmo collaris*), a species of sea-trout, which ascends the rivers to their head-waters and frequently remains in the lakes, returning to the sea the following spring. These were the only fish which would take the spoon; all our angling efforts were useless with regard to the other numerous species. The *haiko* (*Oncorhynchus lagoccephalus*) and the *garbuska*, or humpback (*Oncorhynchus proteus*), arrive almost simultaneously in July and the beginning of August, and are not supposed to return to the sea after spawning. Another species, the *krasnaia* or red fish, is caught by the natives in great quantities in the Kamchatka and Bolshaia rivers. Its flesh is crimson red, but does not compare in taste with that of its rivals. The kelts of these fish, like those of European salmon, become red, and swell to a considerable size; their jaws become hooked and their teeth unusually developed towards the end of September. As regards the salmon-fishing in Kamchatka, I cannot pass over in silence the arbitrary fashion in which this highly important branch of native industry is treated. As the reader may know, fish constitutes the main sustenance of the population, and takes the place of bread. Hitherto, Japanese fishermen had unlawfully poached along the entire coast of the peninsula, abandoning the Kuriles for these more prolific waters. The

Russian Government had made no restrictions with regard to this invasion of its neighbours, so long as no harm was done to the inhabitants of the interior. Unfortunately the Russian Seal Fisheries Co. had of late gone in for fishing in addition to its original undertaking, and had hired for this purpose numbers of Japanese, whose junks now scoured Avatcha Bay. These fishermen were to receive a certain percentage of their catch and deliver the remainder to the wealthy monopolists, who were at that time (1900) building a canning factory on the shores of one of the inlets of the bay. In order to increase the output on a larger scale, the mouths of the main rivers, Avatcha, Paratunka, and others, had been netted, thus preventing the fish from reaching the upper waters, where the unfortunate inhabitants of the settlements found their annual supply considerably decreasing and sat gloomily invoking the heavens! For not only did these proceedings, of which they were unaware, deprive them of their own living, but they were at a loss also to feed their famished dogs, which indirectly affected their sable-hunting in winter. It seems to me that it is of the utmost importance to prohibit such netting encouraged by the Company, and that the question should be most seriously considered on the part of the local authorities.

After our repast, Vasska's first attempt, we caught sight for the first time of the Koriak volcano, now extinct, raising its lofty snow-clad cone through the gap between the hills north-west of Petropavlovsk. To the right lies the lower but active volcano Avatchinsky (8,000 ft.), which was emitting a small cloud of white smoke; a formidable eruption of that volcano had taken place in October, 1894, and all its slopes were covered with a thick layer of lava. I learnt that in the previous year it had given signs of disturbance, and that a slight earthquake had been felt at Petropavlovsk. Dr. Tiouhoff, whose acquaintance I made later, had ascended the mountain almost to the summit four months after the eruption, and obliged me with a most vivid description of his experience. I noticed that a strong south-easterly wind blew constantly during the day, from nine a.m. to seven p.m., with marvellous regularity; evenings were perfectly calm. Fogs are almost always brought by southerly winds; north-east winds never fail to bring on storms, and when a hunter talks of the "nord-ost" the expression implies the maximum of a rough time and imminent danger. Numbers of bear skins for sale never ceased to strew the thresholds of our tents. The price of them—from two to five roubles apiece—was not excessive; they pointed to the huge size of

the animals, but very few carried dark coats, most of them being of an ugly light brown colour. We were told that thousands of them were annually exported to the United States and other parts of the globe, and that we should take plenty of cartridges in store for



ANTLERS OF CARIBOU.

bears. I was shown a wonderful pair of caribou horns picked up by a native in the neighbourhood; they carried an unusual number of points, but their length was not remarkable, and as they were bleached and weather-worn I did not acquire them, but was content to have them photographed by Tallent. The night

before our departure we all dined on board the *Yakut*, whose merry captain treated us royally, and toasts to each other's success were heartily exchanged. During dinner the orchestra was supplemented by a huge gramophone, whose *répertoire* included both Wagnerian airs and music-hall ditties. Madame Melba's voice resounding at Petropavlovsk was no common incident.

On the following morning (June 25), at 10.30 a.m., our flotilla, consisting of four small boats, or *shliup-kis*, towed by the Ispravnik's steam launch, started out of the harbour amid the cheers of the population. We intended that day to camp by the Vilutchka Inlet (twenty-five miles down the coast), and little knew that a series of misfortunes was in store for us. Hardly had we reached the middle of the bay when His Excellency, who had insisted on accompanying us to the entrance, declined to proceed any further under the pretence of an insufficient supply of coal. We strongly suspected that the gentleman had begun to feel sea-sick and longed to return to his "happy home." The wind being against us, there was no possibility of hoisting our sails and continuing the journey; there was no alternative but to abandon further progress and pitch tents on the opposite shore of the bay, with the intention of starting again at day-

break in order to get well ahead before the usual south wind began blowing, oars affording us but a slow advance. We accordingly camped in a regular gale. In the afternoon we attempted trolling along the shore of the bay, but salmon seemed quite indifferent to the spoon-bait.

Next day we were on the move before sunrise, and embarked at four a.m. The water was perfectly smooth, and the rose-capped cones of the volcanoes already shone bright against the clear morning sky. As we neared the entrance of the bay the swell from the ocean grew stronger and stronger, and the waves, following each other in rhythmical procession, threatened to swamp us every moment. Our nutshells, though a few yards apart, would disappear for a few seconds in the deep, watery gully and rise again to the top of the next billow, ascending its slope almost perpendicularly. The moving line of the sea in front of us grew gradually higher, and we could see at times these huge masses of water dashing against the precipitous crags of the coast, covering them with snow-white foam. Fortunately for us, they did not break on their way, for we should have inevitably capsized. The Admiral deemed it prudent to turn back, this difficult manœuvre being carried out with great skill and some danger. Again we steered towards

land, this time to the northern side of the bay, and presently anchored in a small harbour some twelve miles east of Petropavlovsk. Great was our disgust when we found ourselves pitched again so near our starting-point. A spell seemed to hang over us. However, we did not despair, and decided to wait for the swell to subside, hoping for better luck on the morrow. During the day Littledale and I went up one of the promontories to obtain a better view of the country we wished to explore. The mighty Vilutchá, clad in snow, with a high range of hills running to its right, intercepted us from the regions beyond; the panorama we had before us was imposing and beautiful. It was very tantalising to see those vast hunting-grounds almost within touch, and yet to be unable to reach them, for a voyage by land was out of the question. There, amidst the roar of the ocean, hovering below us with numerous gulls and cormorants, was a magnificent Pallas's sea-eagle (*Thalassaitus pelagicus*). It had evidently nested in one of the crevices of the rock at our feet, and kept settling in a concealed fissure where we could not get a shot. It was a splendid specimen of that great northern sea-eagle, and though Littledale waited for a shot, the bird never gave him a chance. Not far from camp stood two or three fishermen's huts and



OUR SECOND CAMP ON THE SHORES OF AVATCHA BAY.

a fish-shed. We witnessed the evening catch, which is effected a little before sunset. The net, starting from the shore, is carried in a boat and gradually laid out in a semicircle of thirty to forty yards. The presence of fish is noticed by the movements of the corks which float on the surface. The net is then hauled in slowly by a couple of men up to their waists in water. It gave quite a good result, consisting of eighteen large salmon, amongst which were *tchavycha*, *haiko*, *garbusha*, and *goltsi*, averaging over twenty pounds; the largest fish weighed forty pounds. This operation was repeated several times with about the same result. As soon as the sun goes down the run of fish at once ceases. The fishermen's dogs stood whining around in eager expectation, and received their share in the shape of small turbot, which they devoured there and then.

Nights were still cold, and warm blankets were welcome as we turned in early after supper consisting of the customary boiled salmon. On the following morning we were up at 2.30 ready to start, when the Admiral, who had gone out in one of the boats to examine the state of the open water, returned with the unwelcome report that the swell had increased during the night, and was heavier than ever. He added that it was impossible to proceed out of the bay

without danger of being swamped, that the wind had shifted to the south-east, and that the mist which was gathering foreboded an approaching storm. At the same time the glass was falling fast. Nothing was to be done but to return to Petropavlovsk and find some other way of getting at the coveted sheep.

At six a.m. we found ourselves once more alongside the *Baikal*. She had now landed all her supplies, and was getting up steam to continue her journey. We immediately went on board to inquire of the obliging captain whether he would consent to convey us on his way north, and disembark us on Cape Schipunsky, as he was about to start that very morning. He said he was quite willing to comply with our wishes, but that, in case of a heavy sea, he could not attempt to approach land at that point, and that we should have to take the risk of an involuntary cruise to Nijni-Kamchatsk, which was no pleasant prospect. Moreover, he added, he might not be able for the same reason to pick us up on his return journey, and we might have to remain an unlimited time on that inhospitable shore in hopeless expectation, like wrecked sailors on some remote island. Having thanked the captain for his sound reasoning, in this emergency we turned to the only remaining small steamer, the *Storozh*, which lay at

anchor close by. Its captain, a Finn by birth, and a regular sea-wolf by vocation, being approached on the subject, declared he was ready to comply with our views and take us to one of the southern points of the peninsula. Being thoroughly acquainted with the coast, he thought that Khodutka Bay, a few miles beyond Asatcha Inlet and some eighty miles from Petropavlovsk, was the most sheltered one, and our Admiral attesting the presence of game in that neighbourhood, we jumped at this providential scheme. Captain Heck (for such was our new friend's name) proposed to start on the next day but one, taking our baggage and two of our boats on board, while a third was to be towed behind. Our fourth boat was to sail, if possible, on the morrow with a crew of four men, and join us three days later at Khodutka. Provided the weather was not too bad, we could be landed at our destination the same day after a ten or twelve hours' passage. The start was to take place before daybreak in order to keep in good time. Meanwhile we pitched our tents again on the sandspit awaiting further developments. In the afternoon of the following day we witnessed the departure of our fourth boat, which was to meet us at Khodutka. We never saw it again; not that it had capsized, but when the men returned after a three weeks' unnecessary cruise, we

had already started for the interior. Towards evening, as we were engaged in shipping our belongings on board the *Storofj*, the Ispravnik sent us for inspection his team of sledge-dogs duly harnessed and put to his *narta*, a most comfortable-looking closed vehicle, on



THE ISPRAVNIK'S TEAM OF SLEDGE-DOGS.

long snow-runners, made of reindeer skin with a small window behind and room for a single person. A native driver in winter clothing, with his sharp-edged stick, accompanied this arctic turn-out—quite an interesting display, which Tallent proceeded to photograph. My valet, Cristo, was taken ill during the night and declined to follow us on our expedition, so that I



THE ISPRAVNIK'S "NARTA" AND DRIVER.

hurriedly secured the services of a boy called Lambert, who spoke a few words of English and whose father, an American by birth, had settled down at Petropavlovsk and had died there. He was an active young fellow, and was delighted to share our hardships. Having embarked on the *Storof*, where the accommodation was in no way too spacious—Littledale and Tallent slept in the dining-room—we expected to find ourselves next morning on the move, but it turned out that the fog was so thick that it was out of the question starting before eight a.m., when the mist lifted at last. We had hardly steamed five miles out of the harbour when our ship stopped owing to something having gone wrong with one of the engines; for be it known it was a twin-screw steamer. The captain, engineer, and passengers proceeded to lend a helping hand and endeavour to detect the reason of this delay. To the general disgust it was not till the afternoon that a broken nut was found, after every separate piece had been dismantled and carefully inspected. Our chances of reaching Khodutka that day accordingly vanished. Another most uncomfortable night in our small, dirty cabin—more of a cupboard than a cabin—made us pine for our tents again. At supper Captain Heck, who was no ordinary person, related many adventures that had befallen him during his thirty

years' experience in the Northern Pacific. He had taken to whaling in his younger days, and had risked his life in many a terrific storm. Not destined to become a sailor, he had come over from Finland in the sixties as a colonist, with his wife and children, and had settled down in the Ussuri district, on the Chinese frontier, with a view to farming. He was prospering in every way, when one night, during his absence, a party of Chinese brigands fell upon his farm, slaughtered his children, and carried away his wife, whom he had never seen again, notwithstanding his desperate efforts to trace the criminals. Since then he had vowed an everlasting hatred of Chinamen, and had taken to the sea.

Next morning, the same engine still bumping, it was decided that we should continue our journey with the aid of the other engine, at the rate of four knots an hour, and if only the wind was favourable, we should have the sails up to help. We started in this manner at eleven a.m., and reached the entrance of that ill-fated Avatcha Bay in a couple of hours. Here we were met by the same heavy swell, together with a fresh southerly breeze. We could not possibly get beyond Vilutchá Inlet that day on account of the slow speed and contrary wind. But here again fortune turned against us. Hardly had we passed the last

corner of the bay when the cylinder of the second engine gave way, leaving us entirely at the mercy of the waves! Again we were obliged to wheel round, and, hoisting sail, steer back for Petropavlovsk, which we managed to reach, disabled as we were, on the following morning, after another dreadful night on board. As for the poor captain, he had to sail to Vladivostok, there being no means of repairing the broken cylinder in such a place as Petropavlovsk! We found ourselves once more encamped on the same old sandspit in a most embarrassing dilemma, though it was not without a profound feeling of relief that we bade farewell to the *Storöj* and re-entered our tents. There can be no doubt that if one wishes to obtain sport along the coast of Kamchatka, where bighorn are certainly more plentiful than in the interior, chartering a yacht in Japan, or elsewhere, and so leaving one's movements free, is the sole chance of success. As it was, our successive failures to reach the sheep ground from the sea were not so much to be regretted, for it must be borne in mind that our main object from the first had been to discover wild sheep in the interior, where they had never, as yet, been shot, and it was merely on account of the impracticable communication inland that we had deviated from our original plan.

We now reconsidered our former scheme, and turned our attention towards the Ganál Range. It was quite possible that during the days wasted in our fruitless attempts to get away, the passes into the interior had been opened, and that we could accordingly penetrate into the peninsula along the only existing route which led to the head-waters of the Kamchatka River. We decided to carry this out at any cost, and despatched the Admiral to muster a few ponies, with the aid of the Ispravnik, who sent the three Cossacks of his "guard" on this errand to the different settlements of the bay. Such horses as they might manage to collect were to await us at Khutôr, a small hamlet situated a few miles up the Avatcha River. As for ourselves, we were to start across the bay, and follow the stream in canoes to the Khutôr rendezvous, whence our expedition by land was to begin. In the meanwhile Cristo had shaken off his attack of fever, which I strongly suspected to be connected with our sailing trials, and resumed his duties on hearing of our new intentions. We were off, as projected, on July 2, at five a.m., leaving Petropavlovsk for the fourth time. Our two boats, with ourselves and baggage on board, were towed across the bay by the steam launch, minus the Ispravnik this time. It was a lovely fresh morning,

such as one only sees in northern regions. We passed a few fishing-huts along the shore, and presently reached the bar at the mouth of the Avatcha. Though it was still high tide, the water at places was



NEAR THE MOUTH OF THE AVATCHA RIVER.

so shallow that even the canoes, into which we embarked, had to be hauled some hundred yards along the sand by the Admiral and crew till we got into the bed of the stream. It took us over two hours to negotiate the bar, and it was solely owing to the energy of our men that we surmounted the difficulty.

I do not think I ever came across a more willing and determined lot than these natives of the coast, whose intelligence, much above the average, was constantly sharpened by the countless hardships of hunting. Their dug-out canoes, which represent boats in the interior of Kamchatka, are no more than poplar trunks, some twenty feet long by a couple of feet in width, rounded at the bottom and hollowed out by an axe. They are skilfully manned by the natives with the aid of a long pole or a spade-shaped paddle. Owing to their rounded keel, however, the slightest awkward movement may turn them over, and it requires great experience to punt them across a fast current, which is done by Kamchadales at full speed, and when manned by them appears quite easy. For greater steadiness two dug-outs were lashed together for us, and we soon found ourselves comfortably seated in them.

On entering the river we found the current exceedingly strong, flowing at places at the rate of eight knots an hour, which considerably reduced our speed. The country on either side was low and marshy, with dense vegetation, occasional birch woods, and willow trees overhanging the water. In order to avoid the swift current in mid-stream, we kept close to the banks, and, though our men rowed ever so hard, it

was sometimes all we could do to maintain our position and prevent the boats drifting back. At places the river widened considerably (over two hundred yards), and the current becoming slower, we could advance a little faster; at others, where the



THE AVATCHA RIVER AND KORIAK VOLCANO.

banks happened to be clear of bushes, we were towed by the whole crew. Luckily—had it not been for that circumstance we should never have reached Khutòr that evening—gusts of a favourable breeze would fill our sails and afford our men a few minutes' rest. We halted at noon for luncheon. The heat was

intense, and here for the first time we were introduced to Kamchatkan mosquitoes, which are the scourge of the country at that time of year and later on were to embitter our trip. Clouds of them now swarmed round us, gathering from all sides, our faces and calves being the scene of a regular battlefield. Smoke was to be henceforth our only defence, together with occasional whiffs of wind; but dead calm to us meant perfect agony. The Admiral tried to console us by saying that this was mere child's play in comparison with what lay in store for us, especially on the Ganál *tundra*, or marshy waste, and his forebodings proved correct. Towards evening, half a mile below Khutôr, the current being swifter than ever, we made for the opposite side, where the stream was slower. This unfortunate manœuvre brought us on a sandbank, where we remained aground for over an hour in full sight of our destination. It was only after continued exertions on the part of our men that we were finally towed off the bank, and managed to reach Khutôr at seven p.m., having accomplished only ten miles in twelve hours. Khutôr cannot even boast of the title of a hamlet, for two lonely huts standing on a sloping lawn and a fish-drying shed by the river were the sole buildings attached to it, the population being represented by one family consisting of a fisherman, his wife, and two girls.

Some twenty dogs sat out at the entrance of their holes, for at that time of year, on account of the mosquitoes, they bury themselves as much as they



SLEDGE-DOGS AT REST IN THEIR BURROWS.

can under ground, and dig burrows for that purpose. Along the banks rows of larger excavations, about ten feet in circumference and five feet deep, empty at present, were used for laying in stores of fish for the dogs in winter. During the fishing season, and later,

when the rotting fish is distributed to the animals, the approach to a settlement may be detected long before reaching it by the unpleasant smell with which it is invariably connected.

To our surprise we found quite a large gathering of Kamchadales and ponies collected from the



SLEDGE-DOGS AT REST, SHOWING BURROWS.

neighbouring villages already awaiting us; the Ispravnik's envoys had not been idle. The natives, who now surrounded us, were mostly of low stature; their features bore a distinct Asiatic type with prominent cheek-bones, small dark eyes, and jet-black wiry hair. They were probably half-breeds between the original inhabitants and Russian colonists,

the purely local race being, I believe, extinct. Their costume resembled that of Russian peasants—a blue cotton shirt under an old brown jacket, broad trousers tucked into top boots, and a military-shaped cap. Their boots were made of reindeer hide, soles stitched



MODE OF TYING UP SLEDGE-DOGS.

on to seal's throat-skins round the calves. At their head was the *Starshinà*, or chief official of Stary Ostrog, a settlement four miles distant. He wore several medals on his breast, and proudly declared to us that he had represented his district at the Tsar's coronation in Moscow. The ponies, about twenty in

number (many more than we hoped to obtain), were small and, as we soon discovered, exceedingly vicious. We proceeded to pitch camp, having instructed the Admiral to select eight of the best men for our caravan and the safest horses. We learnt that the path to Koriak village was quite good, and that we should probably find no difficulty in reaching Ganál and the valley of the Kamchatka River.

With regard to game no information could be obtained. Our hostess at Khutôr was a kind old woman, who, wishing to impress upon us that she was no common person, told us that she had actually been to Petropavlovsk, "the town," as she called it, and had seen several steamers in her life, as well as the Archbishop of Kamchatka, then on a visiting tour. Our presence in these remote parts will probably lead to many an embroidered tale in the country. To our regret we had now to pay off and part with our sturdy mariners, being obliged to take on with us the owners of the ponies. We only retained the Admiral, or rather, as he was now to be called, the General in Command of our forces, together with another hunter, Silivanoff, whose name was shortened down to "Silly," in strict accordance with his intelligence. A party of our former companions was to start in search of the boat which was on its way to Khodutka Inlet. The new

men, fearing no competition and alleging that it was the busiest time of year, took advantage of us accordingly, and charged the exorbitant sum of two roubles a day for each pony and the same for each man ; nor could they be induced to go for less. They thoroughly realised that we were in their power, and their terms had to be accepted. The night was bitterly cold, and the lack of blankets, which we had omitted to unpack in order to make an early start, was sorely felt.

On the following morning our departure was most unwillingly postponed until eleven a.m., our horses obstinately refusing to be loaded. The same operation had to be repeated three or four times over, and although the men appeared accustomed to the job, and no novices in the art of packing, hardly had we gone two hundred yards ahead when a general stampede took place, the young foals joining with their mothers in wild confusion, and our baggage flying in all directions. Luckily no serious harm resulted from this indescribable *mêlée*, save a long and tedious delay. The path led through monotonous birch woods with a dense undergrowth of scrub, and crossed several side-waters of the Avatcha. Our horses kept constantly stumbling against roots of trees, and one of them fell into the stream, damping our precious flour. There was not a sign or track of animals of any kind, even

birds being extremely scarce. On the other hand, mosquitoes never ceased to harass both ponies and men. It is possible that whatever game there might be in these woods had retired to higher ground on



ONE OF OUR PACK-PONIES.

account of these merciless foes. The *Starshinà* told me in earnest that bears are so troubled by mosquitoes and gnats that, in order to escape from their enemies, they will run a few hundred yards and suddenly crouch down under a bush in the hope of misleading their tormentors; although they are probably soon

discovered by their pursuers or attacked by others. For the first time our mosquito-nets were produced ; these we carried over our faces, and a considerable relief they were to us, for without them we should probably never have dared to cross the Ganál tundra. We were accompanied all through the woods by a strong smell of wild garlic, which grows profusely in the country ; flowers were not numerous as yet—only a few crocuses and anemones scattered here and there. Although the natives had promised a short twenty-verst (thirteen miles) march to Koriak, we found that the Kamchatkan unit is akin to the Scotch mile, and that we had gone fully eighteen miles before late in the afternoon we reached the longed-for camping-ground about a quarter of a mile from the village, which we could not as yet perceive. Koriak lies concealed by birch groves, on the right bank of the Avatcha, and consists of a few log-built huts, fish-sheds, and a small wooden church. Opposite rises the lofty cone of the volcano which bears the same name. The inhabitants—a few families in all—came crowding round us and watched us pitching camp with intense curiosity. The same Asiatic type distinguished these men, though it struck me to be less noticeable in the representatives of the weaker sex, who resembled ordinary Russian peasant girls both in features and dress. They all

seemed painfully concerned with regard to the "unaccountable" lack of fish, which usually ascend the rivers in large shoals at that time of year, and were at a loss to explain this delay. The season, they said, was the



NATIVE GIRLS AT KORIAK.

worst they had ever had, and, if continued, starvation lay at their door. I naturally refrained from informing these poor people of the true reason of their misfortunes, intending to call the Ispravnik's attention to the subject on our return to Petropavlovsk. But the General and Silly gave them the disastrous news

of unlawful netting at the mouths of the rivers, and general indignation ensued, followed by the despatch of a petition to the head of the district.

Next morning we struck camp at sunrise, with the prospect of a short march of fifteen versts. The *Star-shinà* had told us that we should pass along the foot of a lofty range, and that it was possible we might find there "what we wanted."

As these hills lay on our way to Natchiki and Ganál, we decided to make a halt, and visit those grounds on the following day. The path led through small swamps and dreary woods, similar to those of the previous day. Camp was pitched ten miles beyond Koriak, in a marshy locality, and numerous fires were lit to keep off the swarms of mosquitoes. South of us a steep narrow gully led up to broken crags, and we could just detect through the gathering mist large patches of snow several thousand feet above us. Unfortunately, clouds became denser in the afternoon, hiding the loftier regions from view, and presently a deluge of rain poured down upon us, lasting steadily all night. The whole of the next day was spent drying our belongings with the aid of a couple of stoves, hunting being out of the question. We decided to continue our journey towards Ganál, leaving this doubtful place for our return, and struck camp at

eight a.m. *en route* for Natchiki, a settlement twenty-two miles distant. The weather had now cleared again. Queer-shaped volcanic rocks and cones, still almost entirely snow-covered, rose to our left. A well-defined path denoted a certain amount of traffic, and took us at first through monotonous birch forests, some of the trees attaining huge dimensions; the grass in places was high, and the undergrowth at times so thick that there was no trace of the path. A capercaillie got up within range of shot and flew silently through the wood, settling down a little further; a sprinkling of white in the plumage showed his northern origin. Our ponies seemed now fairly accustomed to their new duty, and though the more vicious ones seemed inclined to provoke a stampede, they were soon brought to order. The path, or native "highway," was marked by oval cuts in the bark of the birches, some six feet above level, as well as by poles irregularly stuck in the open ground, where absence of trees failed to indicate the winter road. The scenery changed insensibly as we advanced at an easy canter, the woods gradually giving way to willow and juniper bushes, low creeping cedars, and patches of yellow rhododendron in full bloom. After crossing a rapid stream, the Topola, a tributary of the Avatcha, we halted for our midday rest. I inquired of one of

the caravan-men, who was acquainted with the country, whether sheep were to be found on the slopes of the neighbouring hills. Though he appeared to confirm their presence in these parts, his assertions were to be received with considerable caution, as natives are wont to assert what they believe is expected. Owing to the previous day's downpour, mosquitoes were less troublesome during this march; they joined us again towards evening on the outskirts of Natchiki. In the afternoon, for the first time, we came across tracks of bear in the mud, and one of the party actually caught sight of one, disturbed by our imposing procession. Although at no altitude, we had to cross patches of snow here and there. Three or four miles before reaching Natchiki our caravan came to a small "dry" tundra; this was the top of the pass—if it may be so called—dividing the system of the Avatcha from the watersheds of the Bolshaia and Kamchatka Rivers. Natives talk of a "dry" and a "wet" tundra; the former definition implies the pony sinking up to its knees, while the latter may swallow up the animal entirely. I noticed how careful the horses were in stepping along the tundra, constantly avoiding placing their feet on occasional emerald-green patches of grass, which were indeed treacherous. From here we descended into a broad valley, that of the Bolshaia

River, which flows into the Sea of Okhotsk, and half an hour later found ourselves in sight of Natchiki. Upon approaching the hamlet we were greeted by the usual howling of dogs and the usual loathsome smell of decayed fish. The Bolshaia opposite Natchiki is



A BEAR-SKIN WINDOW.

not more than thirty yards wide and about three feet deep, its current strong. We decided to pitch camp on the right bank of the river, the village being situated on its left, thus keeping at a reasonable distance, and in comparative privacy. A few log-cabins, inhabited by some forty natives, and more fish-drying

sheds than huts, constituted the settlement, a former Cossack *ostrog*, or fort. The window-panes of the habitations, instead of glass, were replaced by bear bladder-skins tightly fitted into the rough framework.



A GROUP OF KAMCHADALES AT NATCHIKI.

At the time of our arrival the *krasnaia* salmon* season was in full swing, and most of the sheds attested adequate supplies for winter.

* *Oncorhynchus lycaodon* (Pall) is called the *krasnaia*, or red fish, because of the dark crimson colour of its flesh.

CHAPTER V.

The Bolsheretsk valley—Crossing the river—Salmon fishing—Success with spoon bait—Fifteen fish in an hour—Astonishment of the natives—Their mode of fishing described—Hot sulphur springs—*Saraná*, or native potato—Start for Malka through the Natchiki valley—Incessant rain—Tracks of bears—Their love of salmon and mode of fishing—Willow grouse first seen—Arrival at Ganál—On the banks of the Bystraia—Mosquitoes in myriads—We engage an old native hunter and his two grandsons—Across the valley of the Bystraia and the Ganál tundra—Clouds of mosquitoes—Antlers of caribou on the tundra—Crossing the Bystraia—The Kamchatskaia Vershina, an extinct volcano—Dense brushwood—Tracks of bears—Ten days from the coast; two months from St. Petersburg—A bear shot—Native method of estimating weight—Two more bears—Vast tracts of moor and snow-fields—Lake Sofka Demidoff—Return to camp—Littledale brings in four heads of *Ovis nivicola* and a bear—My first glimpse next day of *Ovis nivicola*—A young ram missed—Better luck with two four-year-old rams; both bagged—Littledale secures three more rams and a ewe for the British Museum—Amusing adventure with a bear—Skinning heads and taking photographs.

THE broad Bolsheretsk valley in which we were camped runs in a south-westerly direction, and is bordered on both sides by low alder-covered ranges, patches of snow being still visible on their higher slopes. In the immediate proximity of Natchiki the hills are mere rolling knolls, intercepted by numerous marshy tracts, through which the track winds towards

the valley of the Kamchatka River. A couple of natives ferried us over the stream in their narrow canoe, which was most skilfully punted across the swift current in a few seconds, one of the men pushing with his long pole at the head of the dug-out, the other at its stern. On reaching the opposite



THE NATCHIKI VALLEY AND SETTLEMENT.

bank, strewn with thousands of decaying fish, our first inquiry was on the subject of wild sheep. Here the Kamchadales seemed to know something more about these animals, and told us that one of their comrades had seen a herd last winter on the mountains west of Natchiki some forty versts from the village. They added that most of the inhabitants were hunters,

but that their special attention was directed towards bear, reindeer, and sable, which were considerably



DUG-OUTS LASHED TOGETHER (NATCHIKI).

more profitable to them than sheep. In spite of their positive statements, we thought it better to resume our journey to the Ganál main group, where we hoped to find more likely haunts in the upper regions

at the head-waters of the Kamchatka River; we accordingly resolved to start on the following day. In the meanwhile, we brought out our rods and fishing-tackle to give the salmon a fair chance. Our flies proved a complete failure with those unsophisti-



STARTING OUT SALMON FISHING.

cated *salmonidæ*, and not a rise could be obtained from them, though we foul-hooked them every moment. Littledale next tried a small spoon-bait, which he cast with great skill into the middle of the stream. The result was instantaneous, and his reel soon whizzed round drawing a taut line; after

a memorable fight a six-pounder was landed, and proved to be a *goltsi*.* My wife and I followed this eventful example, and in less than an hour's time fifteen fish, all *goltsi*, averaging four pounds, lay ready for Vasska. They fought exceedingly well



A FIGHT WITH *GOLTSI* (NATCHIKI).

and gave capital sport. Unfortunately no other fish would be tempted by our bait. It was amusing to watch the intense astonishment of the population at our success; they could not believe their eyes when

* Dr. Guillemard identifies this species with the charr of the Lapland lakes; to me it more resembled the common sea-trout.

the fish kept rising freely at almost every cast of the spoon-bait, and stood bewildered, following attentively each turn of the bewitched reel.

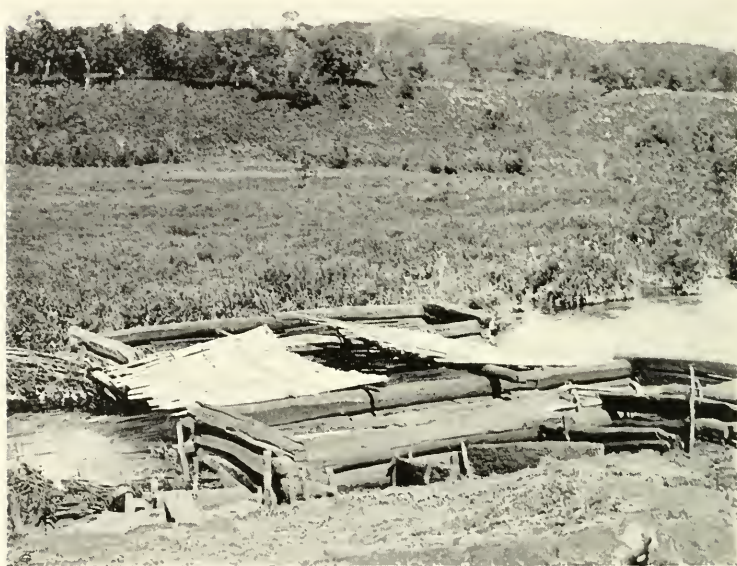
On returning to camp we found Tallent in utter consternation; the valuable "Newman and Gardia"



A SALMON TRAP ON THE BOLSHIERETSK RIVER (NATCHIKI).

camera had been dropped on the way—a loss of no slight importance. Men had been sent back with injunctions not to appear again without it. Luckily it had been left at our last halting-place, where it was found, and brought back during the night. Had it fallen in the high grass or dense bushes, we should

never have recovered it. Next morning another heavy downpour of rain prevented our striking camp, and prolonged our angling experiments. *Goltsi* were decidedly the only game fish of Kamchatka. The



A SALMON TRAP.

krasnaia refused all our inducements, though that day we witnessed an uncommonly large run of them, producing a regular upstream wave. Some of the fishermen took us in the afternoon to see their contrivances for catching fish, an art in which necessities of life have caused them to excel. Rows

of inclined birch stakes are fixed across the stream from one bank to the other, leaving but a narrow opening at one of the ends for the free passage of canoes. Attached to these poles, a little below the surface of the water, and a few yards apart, are



CLEANING SALMON.

placed two or three long wicker baskets, according to the width of the river. The fish which come up are unable to proceed on account of the stakes; they then make their way through the gaps leading into these baskets, out of which inward turned spikes prevent them from escaping. When the natives go

to collect their catch, they lift part of the basket out of water and secure the fish with iron-edged gaffs through a small door at the top. As soon as this



A NATIVE FISHERMAN.

operation, repeated several times a day, is finished, the wicker trap is lowered to its former position. It was with the greatest interest that we watched the dexterity with which these Kamchadales secured their fish ; there must have been at least a couple of hundred

krasnaia, most of them already drowned, in the basket, which was literally crammed with magnificent salmon. In this manner, as they told us, they manage to haul out over two thousand fish a day. The best



CURING SALMON.

fish, salted and dried, were divided between the five families of the village, while the remainder were buried in pits as a winter supply for the dogs, of which there were no less than a hundred in Natchiki alone. Close to our encampment were hot springs, conveying a strong smell of sulphur, which, mingled

with that of decayed fish, was no pleasant addition to our comfort. Round these springs we discovered attempts on the part of the natives to grow vegetables, in the shape of a few small patches of ploughed land. The warmth emanating from the almost boiling water afforded the sole spot in the neighbourhood where potatoes could be cultivated. Later, in the Paratunka district, I came across similar volcanic springs, which are, I believe, disseminated all over the peninsula, and constitute natural hot-houses. I was shown the root of a plant known as the *Saraná*, which natives gather in large quantities in the woods, and which is regarded as the local potato; we met several parties of women in search of this precious plant round the various settlements through which we passed, bilberries and birch bark being likewise eagerly collected by the Kamchadale ladies. We had now lost a couple of days owing to continuous rain, and although the sky was threatening and heavy dark clouds encircled the hills, we resolved to strike camp on the following morning *en route* for Malka.

We started, as decided, at 7.30 a.m., in torrents of rain. Our course at first led us in a due westerly direction, down the Natchiki valley, with a view of circumventing a block of mountains at our back. Passing through marshy wastes and monotonous birch woods,

as natives told us, the best sable-hunting grounds of the district, we presently branched off northward, gradually ascending the valley of a small tributary of the Bol-



A BURIAL CROSS AT NATCHIKI.

shaia River, the Soká, which meanders through tall snowy cotton-grass, and after having crossed another low divide, halted at midday to rest our ponies. We were all drenched by the incessant downpour, and lit

a fire to dry ourselves and our packs. The latter were soaked not only on account of the rain, but also owing to the most awkward habit of the horses, which, when tired, would constantly lie down with their loads in the middle of a stream to enjoy a refreshing bath.

The General told me that June and part of July are usually the dampest months in Kamchatka, continuous south-easterly winds blowing on mist and rain; in fact the weather reminded one of an ugly November day in England, and the general aspect of the country was dreary and depressing. As we advanced we could occasionally catch sight of a higher range of hills to the east, probably the first spurs of the Ganál central group. On our way we came across fresh tracks of two bears. At this time of year they come down to fish, and feed entirely on salmon, which they secure by standing motionless in mid-stream, rarely missing their aim with a blow of their paw. This was related to us by an eye-witness.

Five miles before reaching the small settlement of Malka the path turns sharply to the right through a mossy swamp, where we saw the first willow-grouse. These birds are said to abound in the tundra. At nine p.m. we halted to pitch camp after a long march of thirty-three miles (fifty versts), within twenty-five miles of Ganál. It was owing to the energy of the

General that we managed to cover so much ground that day, for he had given strict orders to the men to stop on no account whatever. On the whole our men were a good-natured lot, and the ponies, though up to all sorts of tricks, strong little animals and used to hard work. That night our dinner, consisting of boiled *goltzi* and roast veal picked up at Koriak, was quite



VASSKA.

a luxurious repast, though Vasska's broad grin had given way to a sad expression of fatigue, and he seemed quite helpless, our companions having to do all the work. Vasska, although a good sort and an excellent cook, would now and again relapse into a lazy mood, and only "cooky fishy or meaty" provided everything he wanted was brought within his reach. This was the case that evening. He kept ordering

the men about, who stood laughing at his helplessness, yet nevertheless complied with the little Chinaman's wishes.

The following day's long march was to bring us at last to Ganál. The scenery was similar to that of preceding days: the road winding through birch and poplar woods, with thick undergrowth of tall grass and juniper; here and there a few cedars would interrupt the uniformity of the country, and in open spaces broad stretches of briar in full bloom afforded a pleasant diversion to the eye. We crossed several lateral streams, and a few miles before our destination struck the valley of the Bystraia River, which joins the Bolshaia at its mouth, close to the village of Bolsheretsk on the Sea of Okhotsk. The valley gradually widens as we approach Ganál, where it extends to three or four miles in breadth, forming the tundra of that name. To our right rose the so-called *Ganálsky vostríaki*, or *Aiguilles*, rows of sharp-edged volcanic crags, which were as yet invisible on account of the prevailing mist. We could just surmise the existence of a loftier range, bordering the eastern side of the valley from the steep gullies sweeping down, and partly filled with last winter's snows. At the further end ran parallel a lower range of flat-topped hills with broad plateaux, which we could distinctly perceive to



KAMCHATSKAYA VERSHINA
(Extinct Volcano).

THE FOLLOWING TRIP TO KAMCHATKA

the men about, who stood laughing at his helplessness, nevertheless complied with the little Chinaman's wishes.

The following day's long march was to bring us at last to Ganál. The scenery was similar to that of preceding days: the road winding through birch and poplar woods, with thick undergrowth of tall grass and runner; here and there a few cedars would interpose their tall, thin trunks among the birches, and in open spaces among the cedars we found tall birches afforded a pleasing contrast. The scenery was not, however, very striking. The mountains were low, and the hills were covered with dense forest. The only thing that was new was the appearance of the tundra in some places. To the right rose the so-called *Ganál-vostriaki*, or *Aguilles*, rows of sharp-edged volcanic crags, which were as yet invisible on account of the prevailing mist. We could just surmise the existence of a loftier range, bordering the eastern side of the valley from the steep gullies sweeping down, and partly filled with last winter's snow. At the farther end ran parallel a lower range of the same hills with broad plateaux, which we could distinctly perceive to



KAMCHATSKAIA VERSHINA.
(extinct volcano.)

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the west. After crossing a wood of high poplars we found ourselves, at about five p.m., on the banks of the Bystraia, opposite Ganál, and encamped on marshy ground among the willow bushes which hung over



A FORD ON THE BYSTRAIA RIVER.

the stream, carefully avoiding closer proximity to the inhabitants and the "village green" praised by Dr. Guillemard. The hamlet is situated at an altitude of about eight hundred feet above sea-level, and, though somewhat larger than Natchiki, could hardly boast of its size, for the population consisted of eighty

souls with a corresponding number of log-huts and fish-sheds, together with a small church visited two or three times a year by the nearest priest, who lived at Milkovo and whose parish was distributed over several hundred square miles. Here we found another fishery



THE GANÁL RANGE.

dam across the stream, though the supplies as yet laid in for winter were not so important as at Natchiki, for the fish were only just arriving. A magnificent forty-pound *tchavycha*, still alive, was brought in for our evening meal. The inhabitants of Ganál belong to the same Russo-Kamchadale breed as at Natchiki,

and were of the lowest grade of intellect we had hitherto met with. The river current at Ganál is unusually rapid, as indeed its name denotes (for Bystraia in Russian means swift), and no wider than the Bolshaia at Natchiki. The water is clear and shallow, and separating there into several channels, forms two or three small islands. Here mosquitoes



VIEW OPPOSITE GANÁL.

swarmed in myriads ; their numbers were so great that the walls of almost every hut were covered and concealed by them to the depth of half an inch. The natives carried brown gauze over their faces ; we could only protect ourselves by lighting fires round the tents and filling them with smoke. As soon as we had settled down in only comparative comfort, accom-

panied by the General, we crossed over to the village in order to secure hunters, or guides, who could lead us to the most likely nullahs. It turned out that there was not a single man capable of giving any information about the hills. The constant reply was, "*Ne*



A SALMON TRAP ACROSS THE BYSTRAIA RIVER.

znaïem" ("We don't know"), which greatly reminded us of the Mongolian "*Belmess*," so aggravating to weary and keen travellers. They said that none of them had ever gone beyond the tundra, and that there was not one hunter in their midst. Each winter an odd caribou would be shot when the animal was so obliging as to run the gauntlet through the village.

Deep was our perplexity at this unexpected turn of affairs, for we had been assured at Petropavlovsk that the Ganálíans were all mighty hunters before the Lord!

In the evening, as we sat discussing plans and shaking off mosquitoes, the General introduced to us an old man of seventy, who, as he expressed himself, was "discontented with his ears." Not only was he quite deaf, but apparently almost dumb. Nevertheless, the few words we could get out of him were as a ray of sunshine in the darkness. He appeared to have been a well-known hunter in his younger days, and had actually shot wild sheep at the head-waters of the Bystraia some thirty years ago. He was quite willing to accompany us, saying that he would do his best to take us to those hunting-grounds, although it was so long since he had visited those regions that he could not promise to recognise them. Strange to say, his memory did not fail him; this old wreck was to be our "guiding star" to the sources of the Kamchatka River. We passed a bad night at Ganál: what with the mosquito bites, the neighing of our pack-ponies, and the whining of the dogs, sleep was out of the question.

A couple of young natives turned up next morning with the invaluable patriarch, who was their grand-

father, in order to take care of him, and a general start was made at 8.30, after a hasty breakfast consisting of sour milk and bilberries. The weather, though dull, was exceedingly warm, and the horses, exhausted by the previous day's forced marches, advanced slowly. The path led at first through birch



EARLY MORN ON A TUNDRA.

woods, and gradually ascending the main valley of the Bystraia, debouched from an open marshy waste. This is the Ganál tundra. Many a tale had we heard of that interminable swamp, such as dogs and even men having been devoured there by overwhelming swarms of mosquitoes; that day's experiences were sufficient to make one believe the most incredible statements. For hardly had we ploughed our way a

few yards through the tundra when clouds of these merciless insects instantly surrounded us, blinding the ponies and men. It was almost impossible to advance. Littledale and I, who took it in turns to walk, there being no spare pack-animals, had to dash ahead now and again, stumbling over mossy knolls, in order to find the path by freeing ourselves for a few seconds from the buzzing circle of mosquitoes. Tallent's patience was brought to such a severe test that he complained that this suffering had not been included in the agreement, and that he never would have come out if he had only known of it beforehand! I kept every moment brushing off the insects from my clothes, killing thousands of them in one sweep of my gloved hand, and at one place Littledale simply fled at my approach to avoid the lumps of mosquitoes on my net. The horses streamed with blood, and it was no easy job for the men to prevent a stampede. In this manner we toiled along over the spongy moss, amidst cranberry and briar, a distance of twenty miles. It was presumably the hardest day on record.

During the march we saw several large caribou antlers, which lay half rotten on the tundra. Camp was pitched late in the afternoon on a drier part of the tundra, and we learnt that we were half-way to a village called Pushina, on the Kamchatka River. Fires

were lit round our tents, affording us comparative rest. According to our veteran guide, another twenty miles should bring us to the foot of the hills, where there was a chance of finding game. The old man had walked the whole way, and did not seem a bit tired; he sat down silently, apart from the rest of the caravan, looking gloomily into space, probably straining his memory to recall some of the scenes of his bygone hunting days. We took great care not to disturb the equanimity of the old sportsman, who was our only resource, and who next morning was the first to be on the alert. The mist had partly cleared away, giving us an occasional glimpse of the higher grounds, but the mosquitoes were as troublesome as ever. At first we followed a few miles up the "highway" in a due northerly direction across the same swampy ground and tall grass; after an hour's march we branched off eastwards. Here at times there was a semblance of a path, which we were told was made by bears, but no further signs of man's presence.

A little later our party crossed a small torrent flowing out of a narrow ravine; this was the Bystraia, which takes its source within a short distance of the great Kamchatka River, and a few miles beyond we entered a valley running to the south-west, at the head of which we caught sight of a broad sweeping

amphitheatre of snow-clad mountains, with a lofty cone-shaped peak to the left ; that was the Kamchatkaia Vershina, an extinct volcano of about 8,000 feet, towering above the different ranges, distributed in all directions, and forming the central mountain group of the southern part of the peninsula. We were now within ten or twelve miles of the head-waters of the Kamchatka River, and as far from our coveted hunting-grounds. We soon struck the river itself, which is here but a small stream hardly ten yards wide, though fast and deep enough to make us look for a ford, which we discovered after a lengthy search. Our old guide seemed quite cheery again, and twenty years younger, as he marched ahead of the caravan along one of the numerous bear trails which ran through the high grass and tall reeds bordering the small river. The vegetation here was exceptionally high, towering above the mounted ponies, which advanced slowly in Indian file. This task was all the more difficult, since he had visited these regions with his sledge-dogs in winter a quarter of a century ago, and the aspect of a country alters entirely at different times of year. Now and again he would halt to pick up another track, or endeavour to recall to mind some more conspicuous feature of the scenery, and resume his course after a few minutes' hesitation. Neverthe-

less, we were at places brought to a standstill on account of the dense brushwood, which grew in zones, like walls across the valley. Underneath the bushes we could distinctly trace the long corridors which had been made by bears for their own traffic, but which were of no use to our ponies. We were obliged to surmount these obstacles by cutting our way through with the axe, which was freely used during this eventful but necessarily slow march. Fortunately open stretches were more frequent, and towards five p.m. we found ourselves at the junction of three fine valleys, beyond which further advance with pack-horses was impossible, for the steep slopes on every side were covered with thick alders and low-creeping cedars, affording no safe foothold even to men.

Camp was pitched in a birch grove by the side of the main stream at an altitude of 1,500 feet; it was the very spot where our aged hunter used to leave his sledge-dogs, and from whence he was wont to start on the war-trail. From here we could distinctly perceive part of our future hunting-ground, and several large snowy corries at the foot of rocky peaks. Raising its cone above the rest, stood, a few miles off, the Kamchatskaia Vershina, like a lone sentry posted to warn off intruders.

Notwithstanding the mosquito-nets which covered our beds, we spent a sleepless night, partly owing to the excitement of finding ourselves at length on the eve of our first day's shooting, exactly ten days after leaving the coast, and nearly two months' in-



KAMCHATSKAIA VERSHINA.

cessant travelling from St. Petersburg! If there was any justice in the world, surely the time had come for our reward. Next morning Littledale and I were up at three, ready for a start. The clouds had disappeared, and a clear sky promised a fine day. My companion, with Silly and one of the caravan

men as gillie, took the southern nullah, whilst I proceeded on horseback due east, escorted by the General and one of the Ganál youngsters. I rode for about an hour up a side valley through densely entangled brushwood and tall grass, picking up count-



THE AUTHOR ON THE WAR-PATH AT VERSHINA.

less mosquitoes on the way; I could hear their unpleasant buzz in the dark as we involuntarily kept shaking them off the bushes in our progress. A light mist still hung round the hilltops and crept along the slopes when we dismounted at the bottom of a ravine, whence the ponies could go no further. In fact, the

last few hundred yards had to be negotiated by wading in midstream, owing to impassable scrub on both sides.

Leaving the horses in charge of one of our followers, we began ascending the right bank, which implied a couple of hours' continuous scramble through the dense zone of alder, dwarf cedars, and rhododendrons. We kept constantly sliding down the exposed roots, and one step forward often meant a downshoot of two or three yards. Moreover, the slope was uncommonly steep, at places almost perpendicular, while the mosquitoes, aroused from their slumber by our movements, took their revenge, and satisfied their appetites on our hands and faces. It was not until the sun was high over the opposite ridge that we finally emerged from that deadly zone and could see where we were. In spite of the recently endured struggle, it was not without an indescribable feeling of curiosity, mingled with an unsurpassed sense of freedom, that I set my foot on the timber-line of those unexplored wastes, which no one had as yet admired, no sportsman except our old guide had visited. Standing on a narrow ledge of rock, I commanded a view over a vast stretch of moor, slanting down from the Kamchatskaia Vershina and other lower pinnacles, with its innumerable patches of snow

glittering in the morning sun, and higher up turning into large snowfields. It was a grand scene of silence and desolation, creating an impression which I shall never forget. I was roused from my contemplation of it by the gillie, who flatly declined to go any further, saying that he felt uneasy, being, I suppose, subject to giddiness, and it required no slight threats on the part of the General to induce him to proceed. Following a well-defined bear-path a little below the ridge,* we had hardly advanced a few yards when my companion suddenly crouched down, pointing towards a moving speck ahead of us. It was a huge bear, which I could plainly distinguish through a small gap in the rhododendrons; the beast was clumsily making its way down the slope some four hundred yards in front of us, probably on a fishing excursion. Turning back to get out of sight, and groping my way through the awkward and blinding brush, I crept in the animal's direction, and on peeping again over a rock I perceived Bruin at 150 yards, steadily advancing to meet us; a quarter of an hour brought me within shot. Taking a steady aim with my '303, I let go at him. The heavy mass pelted

* It must be confessed that the paths made by bears greatly facilitated our getting through the thick covert, which otherwise it would have required superhuman exertions to penetrate.

downhill, giving me a second chance for the other barrel before it disappeared in the depths of the ravine. A loud growl from below convinced me that at least one of the bullets had told. Both the General and I dashed wildly down the slope, nearly breaking our necks over a sheer fall, which it took us some time to turn. We soon struck the beast's spoor, leading straight to the bottom of the gully, where we found the animal lying stone dead half-way down a snow-slide, and with one push rolled him to the side of the stream. According to the General, he weighed over eighteen *poods* (a pood = thirty-two pounds), which meant a great deal more in September, at the end of the fishing season. The coat was of a lightish brown colour (dark ones, as I am told, being very rare in Kamchatka), and still in its winter condition, thick and well-furnished. My companion showed me the local method of telling the approximate weight of a bear, which they do by measuring the length from snout to root of tail with the outstretched hand; so many *tchetverts*, or hands, denote a corresponding number of *poods*. But since the weight varies considerably at different times of year, this calculation is not always correct.

We left the gillie to skin this, my first trophy, and continued up the ravine over steep, hardened snow

till we reached the same ridge. A few minutes later two other bears came in sight to our left, apparently undisturbed by my shots. They were quietly playing together and rolling themselves on the moss; one of them would occasionally make a rush at his companion as if to frighten him, and both would then gallop downhill at full speed, stopping suddenly to begin the same game over again. Followed by the General, I slid out of view, and making a small *détour* to leeward, crept stealthily up a boulder, from the top of which I discovered the unsuspecting pair a hundred and twenty yards below me. Again the report of my rifle aroused the slumbering echoes of the mountains, bringing down the furthest animal, which dropped motionless on the snow. A second shot wounded the other, which dashed frantically uphill with a heavy growl. I let him approach, and then gave him his *quietus* at close quarters full in the chest. Both animals proved smaller than the first one, but their coats were darker and in good order. Three bears in an hour's time was no common quarry, and I began to think it was time to turn my attention to sheep.

Leaving our quarry to be skinned on the way back, we decided to pursue our course to higher ground in search of bighorn. We started accordingly ploughing our way through the light mosses, and carefully spying



LAKE SOFKA DEMIDOFF.

CHAPTER 10. A SHOOTING TRIP TO KAM-HI-KI-KI.

All of us reached the same ridge. A few minutes later
 two other bears came in sight to our left, apparently
 undisturbed by my shots. They were quietly playing
 together and rolling themselves on the moss; one of
 them would occasionally make a rush at his companion
 as if to frighten him, and both would then gallop
 forward at full speed, stopping suddenly to begin the
 same game over again. Followed by the General,
 I shot one of them and brought it back to camp. It was
 a leeward bear, somewhat larger than the first one, of
 which I had seen the skin. It was a full-grown male
 and twenty years of age. It was a good specimen of
 the species, and the skin was in good order. It was
 brought down the hillside and was brought
 motionless on the snow. A second shot was fired at
 the other, which dashed frantically upward with a hoarse
 growl. It lay flat on its back, and then gave him his
 chance as the first one. Both fell in the chest. Both
 were smaller than the first one, but their
 skins were better and in good order. Three bears in
 one hour's time was no common quarry, and I began
 to think it was time to turn my attention to the

leaving our quarry to be skinned by the natives,
 we decided to pursue our course to the north in
 search of bighorn. We started separately, following
 our way through the light moss. And finally, lying



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LAKE SOFKA DEMIDOFF.

ROWLAND WARD LEB. LONDON

in every direction. The flora here was quite of the Alpine type: pink androsaces, saxifraga, violets, asters, and other plants of elevated regions grew profusely between the numerous patches of snow. As we advanced, we struck several sheep-paths with old tracks and droppings, but, though my Zeiss freely examined all the surrounding corries, which presented favourable aspects and afforded capital grazing, there was no sign of *Ovis nivicola*. In addition to this, it was perfect torture to use the binocular for spying on account of the mosquitoes, which would instantaneously settle on one's hands and unveiled face, mercilessly attacking any unprotected part. In this manner, after a couple of hours' walk, we reached the summit of a rounded boulder, commanding a view of vast tracts of moor and snowfields. My aneroid now showed an altitude of 4,000 feet. The scenery I had before me was of unsurpassed beauty. At my feet trickled from beneath accumulated masses of hard snow a small rivulet flowing into a lovely turquoise-blue lake, on which floated large glittering icebergs. Towering above the eastern shores of the lake rose the massive cone of the Kamchatskaia Vershina, with gloomy rocks piercing its snow garment; and lower, craggy ranges running east and west, all converging towards the main central peak. A majestic silence

hung over this bright picture of northern magnificence, as yet unspoiled by the presence of man ; to me it appeared like some fantastic country as described in tales of childhood, which rises in an instant and as quickly vanishes at a stroke of the fairy's wand. But alas ! no well-meaning giant nor friendly dwarfs inhabited these lonely regions to welcome us.

The tiny stream which flowed beneath us was the source of the great Kamchatka River. It enters the lake from the east, and running out of its western extremity, joins another stream from the south, some three miles above our camp ; gradually shifting round through the tundra, it eventually takes a direction due north, which is maintained across the whole peninsula to the mouth at Nijni-Kamchatsk. The lake, which it was proposed that very evening to call " Lake Sofka Demidoff," in honour of the only lady who had ever visited it, was about two miles long by three-quarters of a mile in breadth, and lay at an altitude of 3,500 feet above sea-level. Narrow at both its extremities, it widens towards the middle ; its waters are wonderfully clear and, I imagine, very deep, as its banks are fairly abrupt on every side. The sketch (which I purposely refrain from calling a map) of this lake, and of the sources of the Kamchatka River, showing its initial direction, which I made on the spur of the

moment and now reproduce in this volume, may convey to the reader a general idea of this hitherto unexplored locality.

Seeing no trace of wild sheep, nor of any other living creature, I determined to return to camp after having skinned the two bears, for it was now late in the afternoon, and the prospect of a long struggle through the bush in the dark was by no means an attractive one. We luckily struck a useful snow-slide down a gully, and thus avoided part of the rhododendron zone. Heavily laden with the skins, we reached the bottom of the valley completely exhausted, and found ourselves in sight of the tents at six p.m. Camp was in a state of utter confusion : after the previous day's incessant rain there was not a single pack which had not been damped through, and everyone had hung up his belongings to dry : it reminded one of a gipsy encampment in the midst of the woods. My gillie had faithfully brought in the skin of the first bear, and we all eagerly awaited Littledale's arrival in order to know what might be expected from our first hunting-ground. It was not long before the familiar neighing of ponies, greeting their returning comrades, announced his approach. He brought back four average heads of *Ovis nivicola*, of which the best one measured 34 inches by $13\frac{1}{2}$, and

a large bear skin. That day's bag thus amounted to four sheep and four bears. Littledale had come across the sheep on the higher ridges, where they had probably betaken themselves to seek comparative protection from the mosquitoes. He had only spied the



OUR FIRST DAY'S BAG AT VERSHINA (FOUR SHEEP AND FOUR BEARS).

four rams he had shot as well as a couple of ewes, and, though our success seemed promising, he did not think that, with the exception of bears, game was plentiful in the district. Moreover, he said that sheep in these parts, unaccustomed as they were to human presence, were too tame to afford sport, and would let

him come up to them in full view without attempting to escape ; their ignorance of the rifle and curiosity at the sight of unknown beings placed them entirely in his power. My companion had failed to secure another bear at a long range on his way back to camp.



HEAD AND SKIN OF *OVIS NI'ICOLA*.

Next morning, accompanied by my faithful General and two men, I started before dawn towards one of the southern nullahs, with the firm intention of making straight for the tops, whilst Littledale took an eastern direction with the object of reconnoitring the slopes of the Kamchatskaia Vershina. The night had been chilly, and the mosquitoes in consequence gave us

comparative rest as we rode through the woods and entered a fresh valley. The sky was perfectly clear, promising a fine day. Leaving the horses below the zone of scrub, we found a long, steep ravine, filled with hardened snow, which greatly facilitated our ascent. We could distinguish at the head of the valley rows of volcanic pinnacles, some 5,000 feet high, with precipitous snow-slides shooting down the gullies between them. They ran westward of the main peak, and appeared to be first-rate ground for sheep.

A distance of about six miles as yet intervened, and it took us at least three hours before we reached the more abrupt slopes of the towering crags. As we were preparing for the last scramble I spied a large bear some four hundred yards above us. As I watched him through the glass, digging the earth and slowly advancing at right angles from us, his coat seemed unusually light in colour, almost white. As he was on our way, I suggested a stalk, and, hiding from view, followed a lateral ravine in his direction. Unfortunately, on reaching the commanding ridge, alder bushes, on which we counted for concealment, had become scarce, and further advance in the open would have involved certain failure. Bruin was now two hundred and fifty yards off, and as he appeared to have no intention of coming any nearer, I had to



OVIS NIVICOLA (AN OLD RAM).

take my chance. Out of five consecutive shots, the fifth at least reached its destination, for the beast, which had remained motionless, as if thunder-stricken by the cracks of the rifle, emitted a loud roar, and pelted downhill to my right into patches of dense brushwood, where we could locate him by the waving of the branches above him, as he forced his way through. Though we found blood on his tracks, he was strong enough to pursue his course through the thickly entangled scrub, in the midst of which it would be a dangerous matter to tackle a wounded bear. The rifle was of no avail, and the General proposed to abandon a chase which involved such risk. Time being precious, I agreed to this wise suggestion, and reluctantly leaving the animal to its unhappy fate, proceeded to climb a perpendicular slope towards the left ridge of the valley, along which we journeyed to a low saddle, where we settled down to spy. There mosquitoes again gathered round us in countless numbers ; my companion, who wore no gloves, declined to use the spare Zeiss I had lent him and kept his hands in his pockets. As for myself, I was reduced to an occasional glance at the surrounding corries. I was soon destined, however, to catch my first glimpse of *Ovis nivicola*, for a small grey speck moving among the rocks of one of the lateral spurs

presently came in sight ; this proved to be a young ram. Hoping that he might be accompanied by others, I decided to approach him. Creeping cautiously below the ridge, in an hour we managed to get within a hundred yards of the place where I had spied him, and on peeping over a protruding ledge discovered him still standing in the same spot. I could plainly distinguish the remnants of his winter coat still clinging in patches to his back and withers. Crawling down to a small mossy knoll, I was over-anxious to get a shot, and the result was I scored a clean miss at eighty yards! The ram did not give me a second chance, for he disappeared like lightning round a boulder, and I never saw him again. So far success had not crowned my efforts that day. We returned disappointed to the saddles we had just left, and thence started towards the higher crags of that volcanic ridge, encountering on our way many a "gendarme" round almost vertical rocks, parts of which treacherously gave way under my grip. At places it was necessary to advance in a riding position over the narrow ledge, with precipices of several hundred feet on either side of us.

The aspect of the country beyond, at an elevation of about 5,000 feet, had entirely changed. Odd-shaped rocks of volcanic formation stood out of the



OVIS NIVICOLA (A EWE).

ground like rows of disjointed fingers, between which lay scattered everywhere rough heaps of porous stones and sharp débris of old lava. There were no more signs of grass or vegetation whatever in this place of dark desolation. In addition to this a heavy mist came on unexpectedly, preventing us



KEEPING OFF MOSQUITOES (VERSHINA CAMP).

from proceeding further. It was not until a whole hour had elapsed that we were able to resume our course over the broken ground, peeping here and there through the small gaps into the deep corries below. We passed along numerous paths of sheep, which to judge by the tracks seemed to frequent these places in preference to the lower pastures, and whose habits, in this regard, resembled those of ibex.

Presently, as I was peering down through a clearing in the mist, I perceived two animals on my right coming up a ravine in our direction. Creeping cautiously down the sharp stones, which yielded under my feet, I made for a mass of rock, and on looking over found that the mist had again filled the gully. I waited motionless, the wind being favourable, for that aggravating veil to lift, and as it partially thinned down I vaguely distinguished two sheep advancing quietly a hundred yards below me; I could just tell that they were young rams. Taking my chance, I fired at the nearest one, which rolled over, while the other ran a few yards, and, stopping to look back for his companion, received my second bullet, which knocked him head over heels into the abyss. I found them to be both four-year-old rams, and though the heads were by no means trophies to be proud of, I enjoyed the illusion of a success. One of these animals had entirely shed its winter coat, the other still carried thick brown patches of hair. I was specially struck by the shortness of their skulls and prominent eye-bones. Their summer coat is of a dull grey hue, lighter on the legs, rump, and under the belly; their height at the shoulder is about forty inches. An average ram weighs from 200 to 250 lbs. (six to seven *poods*) without the gralloch. With

regard to their ways, it appears to me, as I have said before, that during the two warm months in Kamchatka they betake themselves to the highest ground and adopt the habits of wild goats, living in the tightest rocks, unlike wild sheep in the other parts of



CAMP DUTY.

the world, that rely more on their sight for safety, and prefer rolling hills. Whether this peculiarity be due to natural inclination, or to a legitimate horror of mosquitoes, it is difficult to say ; their tracks seemed more numerous along the ridges than on the lower pastures. How they can survive the severe winter months of that northern climate, and find shelter or

food when snow covers everything several feet deep, is a mystery. There can be no doubt that *Ovis nivicola* is considerably more plentiful along the coasts, where life is made easier for them, both on account of the constant breeze, which blows away mosquitoes in summer and carries off the snow in winter, as well as for the capital grazing, partly due to the sea salt. The well-known Normandy *prés-salés* owe their celebrity to the same cause. I am inclined to believe that Kamchatkan bighorn, for the same reasons, grow larger and stronger along the sea coast than in the interior of the peninsula. The fact remains that the heads obtained by me, or picked up by the natives near the coast, proved finer than any of those which we obtained in the Ganál region.

Taking the horns and some meat, we now retraced our steps in the direction of camp. It was no light job, heavily laden as we were, the General and I, to reascend the ridge; luckily on the other side we were able to slide down the steep snow-shoots almost the whole way back to the place where the ponies awaited us, and reached the tents in three hours, at seven p.m. Littledale had already returned with three fair heads, one of which measured thirty-three inches, the other two being smaller. He had only seen these three rams together with a herd of ten



A CORNER OF LAKE SOFKA DEMIDOFF

(A likely place for Sheep).



HOWLAND WARD & SONS

THE HEAD OF THE LAKE

PRINTED IN AUSTRIA

ewes on the top of a high ridge, west of the Kamchatskaia Vershina. He said he might have bagged the lot, for they all stood about five minutes round him after his shots; he availed himself of the opportunity to secure one of the ewes, whose skin and bones he brought back for the British Museum.

An amusing adventure befell him that day. While climbing a slope with his hunter, they suddenly met



OVIS NIVICOLA.

face to face a large bear which had come up from the opposite side. Bruin's amazement was great; he got up on his hind legs at first, then crouched down again intently gazing at the intruders. Not wishing to disturb the ground, Littledale picked up a stone and threw it at the beast, hitting him on the snout; whereupon Bruin ran a few yards and stopped again to look back, when another stone was hurled at him, till he eventually decided to be off. On his way home Littledale shot a bear close to camp. Exchanging

that evening our respective impressions, we concluded that few sheep were distributed among those hills, and that one or two more days' hunting would well-nigh exhaust the remaining stock.

Next morning, a thick mist having set in, it was decided to make it an "off-day," and enjoy twenty-four hours' rest. We spent our time skinning the heads and taking numerous photographs round the camp. The incessant struggle against mosquitoes could not be abandoned, and fires were constantly kept up round the tents to smoke out these troublesome foes. The afternoon was quite warm, and dinner was laid out-of-doors, Vasska doing wonders with roast fillets of sheep. Before turning in I found that the barometer had risen and promised a clear day for the morrow.

CHAPTER VI.

Resolve to try the country beyond the Kamchatskaia Vershina—Photographing the source of the Kamchatka River—Two bears seen—A small mountain lake—Two sheep sighted—Plagued by mosquitoes—Lunch on a snowfield—A three-year-old sheep shot—Eight bears in view at once on the snow—Striped grey marmots numerous—Gillie's adventure with a bear—Littledale kills a young ram—Crossing the Bystraia—Birch forest and swamps—Fresh tracks of bear—Intense heat and mosquitoes—Another young ram shot—The heart saved for native medicine—A stampede amongst the horses—Proceed towards Petropavlovsk and camp near Koriak—Despatch a messenger from Khutôr for boats to cross the bay—A white dog of the Kamchatkan breed bought—A good haul of salmon—Medicinal use of bear's bladders—Start in double canoes for the mouth of the Avatcha—Crossing the bar—The launch with boats in tow—News of the war in China—Embark on board the *Tsitsikar* for Nikolaievsk at the mouth of the Amur opposite Sakhalin—Fishing in the harbour—Seals—Start for the sheep range south of Avatcha Bay—Littledale remains at Petropavlovsk—The mouth of the Paratunka river—Through birch forest and across a lake to Kluchi—The village of Kluchi described—Torrents of rain—The men refuse to proceed—Fine head of caribou—Another start—The sheep ground reached and a herd sighted—A difficult stalk and a good ram killed—Return to camp amidst general rejoicing.

SUMMER was now at its apogee ; vegetation, which grows so fast in northern regions and shows so vividly the wonderful resources of nature, starts also in the space of a day towards its speedy decline.

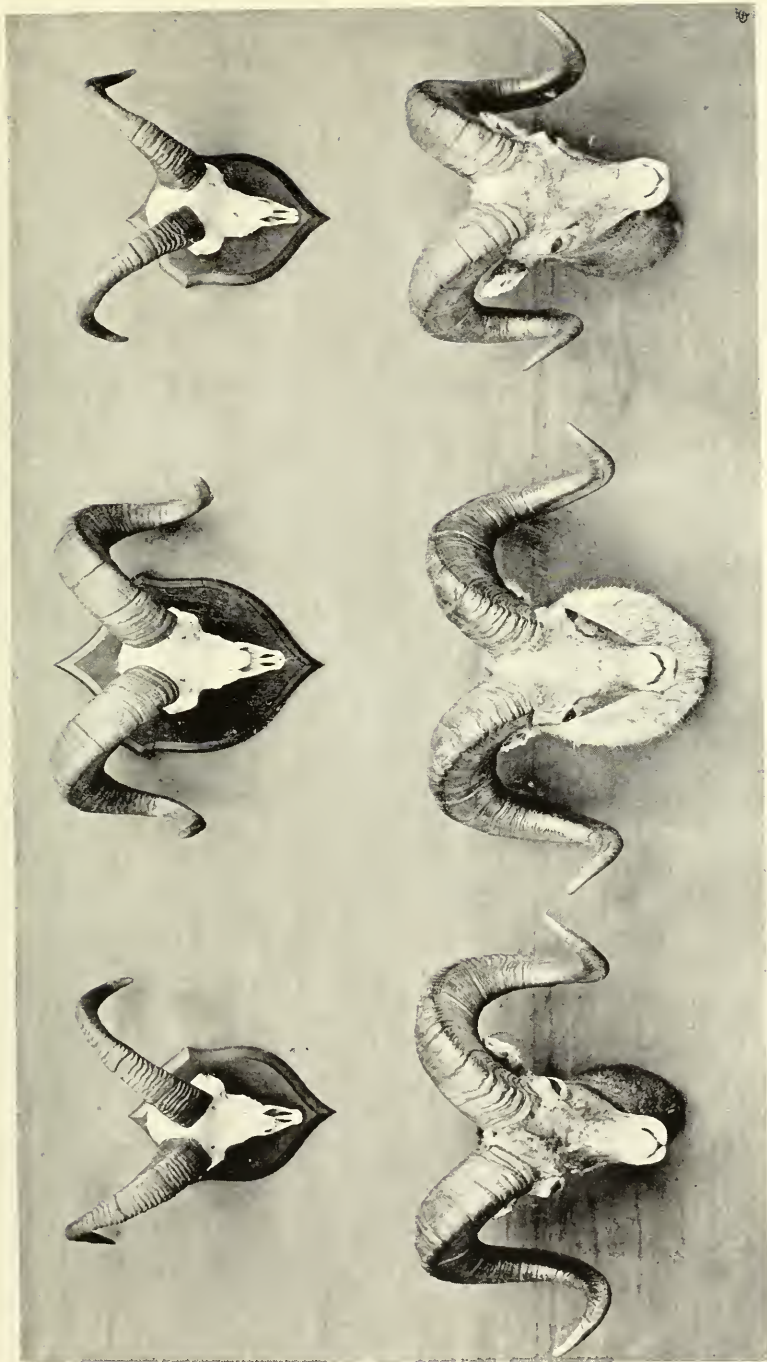
Leaves were turning red, the tall grass, a few hours ago of a deep green, was being touched with yellow, and the briar roses were already dropping their pink petals; the cedars seemed alone to resist the first touches of approaching autumn. Yet that morning, when I was awakened at three o'clock, a damp, foggy morning, the calendar indicated that it was only the 15th of July. I resolved to make an energetic attempt to secure a good head, for no red-letter day had as yet been marked in my diary, and failure after so long a journey was not a pleasant prospect. Littledale might rest on his laurels, but my two small rams were not an important contribution to our common bag. I intended that day to try the country beyond the Kamchatskaia Vershina, and started at four a.m. up the valley leading to the lake accompanied by Tallent, whom I was to leave on my way to photograph the neighbourhood of the source of the Kamchatka River. Luckily the mist lifted soon after our departure, and a couple of hours brought us to the thick zone of bush, through which we pushed our ponies, availing ourselves occasionally of the channel in midstream. On reaching the vast stretches of moorland which led up to the volcano, we proceeded over steep slopes of snow towards a saddle to its left. Two bears were quietly feeding some eight hundred yards off amongst

alder bushes, but I was too much intent on sheep, and was not to be distracted by bears.

Abandoning Tallent to his work on the banks of Lake Sofka Demidoff, and leaving our horses in a hollow, the General and I, with a gillie, pursued our course, and presently came to a small mountain lake at an altitude of about 3,000 feet. In order to inspect as much ground as possible, I despatched the gillie up a side ridge to examine the corrie beyond, whilst I continued towards the higher ridges, toiling for over an hour up lava débris in a gloomy gorge in a due northerly direction. After having spied in vain the near slopes of the peak from the summit of one of the boulders, we discovered a little further some likely ground before us. A broken, sloping ridge, bordering the left side of the Kamchatka stream, led to a loftier hill from which ran down on the opposite side rows of queer-shaped volcanic pinnacles (*kekuria*, as the General called them), forming a huge amphitheatre of rolling stones and blocks of detached rock. Here we began to spy more carefully. A couple of sheep soon came in view, though too distant for us to judge of their sex. After a short hesitation with regard to the wind, we decided in favour of prudence, and ascended to the top of a hill to obtain a better view of the ground before going

further. This plan necessitated a hard climb, which took us three long hours. Then we found ourselves at an elevation of 6,000 feet, the highest point in the neighbourhood after the Kamchatka peak, and commanded on all sides many miles of country. The General pointed out to me the different volcanoes rising above the numerous ranges on the dim horizon. East of us we could plainly see the Jupanovskaia Sopka (*sopka* is the local term for a peak), an extinct volcano of over 8,000 feet, while due south rose, hardly visible, the graceful cone of Vilitcha some hundred miles distant in a straight line: but such was the transparency of the atmosphere that its outline was clearly defined against the light northern sky. The imposing mass of the Vershina stood out at close quarters, and the lake seemed but a tiny blue speck lost in the depths of the moor. A few old rams enjoying their siesta would have greatly heightened the beauty of the picture, but alas! none were to be seen. The mosquitoes had followed us even to these heights, where we might have expected to be at last free from their persecution. We sat down to lunch in the middle of a snowfield, hoping in this way to get rid of the tiresome insects, but were soon to be mistaken, as they presently swarmed round us as thick as ever. The two animals

THE AUTHOR'S BAG OF *Ovis nivicola*.



we had spied from below had lain down at the same place, and proved to be ewes.

After a well-earned rest we started down the ridge, working our way over rocks among craggy pinnacles, and peeping carefully into the ravines on either side, we found a herd of ewes and young 300 yards below us. Adult rams seemed indeed very scarce, for we had now examined great tracts of country continuously on the look-out from six a.m. to two p.m. without catching sight of a single one. Remembering that I had promised the director of the St. Petersburg Museum to present him with a couple of *Ovis nivicola*, I seized the opportunity and proceeded to approach the herd; a few minutes later we were within fifty yards of them as they unsuspectingly advanced among the rocks. Only one of the ewes was clear of her winter coat, the others being in a beggarly patchy condition. As she stepped across the sight of my rifle I dropped her dead, while her friends stood gazing in all directions, and it was only when we stood up that they went off at an easy trot. The General said she was a three-year-old sheep; her coat was of a clean slaty-grey colour, with the usual light parts on the rump, legs, and belly. The fact that she was already in summer garb while the older ones still carried their winter coats led me to the possibly rash

conclusion that the younger sheep shed their coats earlier than their elders. It is always dangerous to generalise upon insufficient evidence, but I had been struck by the same peculiarity in other countries, and similar facts, as well as exceptions, prove the rule. It took us some time to skin the animal and gather all the bones for the skeleton, and evening was setting in when we started back towards camp.

As we alighted on the summit of the ridge an immense corrie lay beyond, and there on the vast snowfields at its bottom awaited us a sight which few sportsmen can boast of having ever witnessed. We counted eight large bears wandering about on the snow, all in full view at once, and within a radius of certainly less than a mile! They appeared to us like huge blackbeetles crawling along a whitewashed floor. It was an uncommon gathering, as I watched them with my glass, clumsily advancing in different directions with their snouts to the ground. Six of them came within the field of my Zeiss, and one of them specially attracted my attention by his enormous size. The General, who seemed to be a connoisseur in the matter, said he must have measured at least twenty-five hands, or *tchetverts*, and consequently weighed, according to the local estimate, twenty-five *poods* (850 lbs.). It was a unique sight. The beasts

had probably betaken themselves to the snowfields to escape from the mosquitoes, intending to return to "land" at night. It was with difficulty that I tore myself away from this extraordinary *coup d'œil*, and resumed my journey home. On our way numbers of striped grey marmots kept popping into their holes as we passed. A long and dreary march over curious strata like sharp tiles set edgeways in the soil, which cut the rubber soles of my shoes, rolling stones, and lower down beautiful light mosses and dwarf rhododendrons, brought us back to the ponies, where we found the gillie still pale with terror from an adventure he had had during our absence. It will be remembered that I had sent him to spy over a ridge in case there were sheep in one of the lateral corries. He had naturally seen none, but had encountered a bear which had actually made for him, and as he had been forbidden to carry a gun, his only resource was his legs. He had managed to escape down a ravine and mislead Bruin, but he vowed he would never visit the hills again without a firearm of some kind.

We reached camp late at night with a painful feeling of disappointment, for my chances of obtaining a trophy were vanishing fast. Littledale had found two young rams on the northern part of the ground, and only brought in a small head, though the tracks he had

taken up indicated the presence of more animals than he had come across. Considering that we had now sufficiently explored the surrounding country, we resolved to strike camp on the following day. Our old Ganálian guide volunteered to conduct us to another nullah further south, saying he knew of a path through the woods where pack-ponies could easily pass. Starting late in the morning down the main valley and branching away from the watershed of the Kamchatka River, we proceeded southwards and crossed the Bystraia, which at that place was but a small stream. The path, if the hardly discernible track we followed may be so called, led us through dense jungle and creeping cedars, over which our horses kept stumbling. A fifteen-mile march took us in this way to the entrance of a valley running down from the same Ganál range, though the stream which flowed in it belonged to the Bystraia. Tents were pitched by the side of the torrent, and friendly smoke soon protected us from the midges.

Next morning I was on the move before dawn, and started, under the guidance of our aged cicerone, accompanied by the General and Silly; as there was not supposed to be ground enough for two guns, Littledale insisted on giving me the preference, and remained himself in camp. We rode at first through



OUR BAG OF BIGHORN (VERSHINA).

the birch forest and occasional swamps, where the advance was slow; on reaching the zone of shrub I could see several miles in front the head of the valley, crowned with rows of pinnacles similar to those I had negotiated round the Kamchatskaia Vershina, and having gone some distance up the river-bed, dismounted after a couple of hours' ride. The sky was cloudless, and promised a scorching hot day. We followed up the long, precipitous snow-slides, which filled the bottom of the gullies, until eight a.m., when we came across fresh tracks of bear. Continuing the ascent, we finally alighted on the rough summit of a ridge running eastwards, at an elevation of 5,200 feet, and settled down with our glasses to spy. But there was no sign of game, save a young ram lying on the summit of one of the *kekuria*. We pursued our weary course in his direction, in the hope of finding others in his company, over almost perpendicular slopes of loose shingle, which constantly gave way under our feet. Presently, Silly, who seemed to reconnoitre our position, declared that we now were on the very ground where Littledale had shot his three rams from last camp a few days before! My chances were melting away like morning mist, and the further ridges being beyond that day's reach, nothing was to be done but to retrace our steps.

Moreover, at noon, the heat was intense, and mosquitoes had by this time found us out, and swarmed to attack our gauze nets. Being out of meat, I crept back towards the youngster which I had despised, rolling him over a rock to the bottom of the ravine, where Silly was despatched to cut him up. We discovered nothing else in the afternoon—not even a bear—and striking one of the gullies, started home thoroughly disheartened by continued failure. The hardened snow of the morning had melted fast during the day, and several times gave way under our weight with a heavy thud as we descended the valley, with the result of giving us many an involuntary bath in the stream beneath. We were in sight of the tents at six p.m., and decided to abandon the Ganál hills. I hoped to retrieve my luck in the Natchiki district, or make a desperate attempt along the sea-coast, and a general start was agreed upon. That evening, when visiting the kitchen, I found Vasska busy gathering, in a dirty bit of paper, what appeared to be a black powder of some kind. On my inquiry as to what it was, he explained to me, in his broken dialect, that this was a precious medicine which he had made himself of the dried hearts of wild sheep; these he had roasted and ground into powder, which he said was a sure remedy against any kind of disease;



LAKE SOFKA DEMIDOFF
(Head-waters of the Kamchatka River).

Moreover, at noon, the heat was intense, and mosquitoes had by this time found us out, and swarmed to attack our gauze nets. Being out of meat, I crept back towards the youngster which I had despised, rolling him over a rock to the bottom of the ravine, where Silly was despatched to cut him up. We discovered nothing else in the afternoon—not even a bear—and striking one of the gullies, started home thoroughly disheartened by continued failure. The hoar-frost snow of the morning had melted fast during the day, and several rivers were dry, and we fought with a hunger that we can remember no other with. The result of going on without success was that we felt sure of our own strength. We were in sight of the coast at six p.m., and decided to abandon the Ganda hills. I hoped to retrieve my luck in the Natchiki district or make a desperate attempt along the sea-coast, and a general start was agreed upon. That evening, when visiting the kitchen, I found Vasska busy gathering, in a dirty bit of paper, what appeared to be a black powder of some kind. On my enquiry as to what it was, he explained to me, in his broken dialect, that this was a precious medicine which he had made himself of the dried heart of wild Boar. Once he had roasted and ground into powder, which he said was a sure remedy against any kind of disease;



LAKE SOFKA DEMIDOFF

W. H. N. ALSTED

a teaspoonful was sufficient to restore broken limbs or sprains. The hunters told me that Vasska had insisted that they should bring to him the heart of every sheep we shot ; he intended to sell the powder in China, where he could obtain a high price for this quaint medicine, greatly appreciated in that country. Vasska was no fool, and secured a profit where he could.

On the morning of July 18 we started back for Ganál. The silent old man led the way, and in a couple of hours brought our caravan to the main path, which we followed down to the village. At four we were once more pitched on the same spot opposite the settlement, and greatly enjoyed the salmon and milk which were sent to us by the natives. Our horses were dead beat ; some of them had fallen lame, others had injured their backs, which showed large sores. During a stampede which took place in the morning one of the stallions had bitten another badly, and they were altogether not in a marching condition.* Nevertheless, we were determined to quit this God-forsaken country, and our men, no less desirous to return to their homes, proved of great assistance in the execution of our long, dreary marches to the coast, which we did much quicker than when we advanced inland.

* In Kamchatka dogs are castrated, ponies never : hence the trouble.

Mosquitoes contributed likewise in no slight degree to push us forward. The dogs at Ganál had to be smoked the whole day for fear of being eaten alive! On the second day after our departure from Ganál we found ourselves again off Natchiki, but a steady down-pour and the vagueness of local information concerning game in the neighbourhood damped our intention of seeking further sport in the interior, and prompted us to resume our journey to Petropavlovsk, where brighter prospects of shooting along the coast still encouraged us. Next day, after a thirty-five-mile march, we pitched camp in the dark, close to Koriak village again, leaving behind the likely ground we had once thought of inspecting on our way to the interior; but the General was all for trying Cape Shipounsky, and the news we received from the *Starshinà* of Koriak, who had been to the "town" with his petition, strongly inclined us to continue the journey. For many Japanese schooners now lay off Petropavlovsk harbour, and a lump sum might induce the owner of one of them to land us somewhere on the coast. Scarcity of fish was still sorely felt by the inhabitants of the settlement, to whom I promised to lend my assistance by supporting their rightful demands before the chief of the district. The following day saw us back at Khutô, whence a messenger was forthwith

despatched for boats to convey us across the bay. We found the water in the river had considerably subsided, and, according to the General, it would be no easy matter to negotiate the bar outside. There we paid off the men, and bade farewell to those useful companions of our short incursion; I was less sorry to leave the ponies, the most vicious of their kind. Our host took us round his "kennels," where about sixty dogs of the pure Kamchatka breed greeted us from their holes with a deafening concert of whines. One of them specially struck me by his good looks, and I inquired of his master if he would consent to part with him, upon which I was asked twenty-five roubles for the dog, and obtained him for fifteen. It was a fine specimen of a native sable-hunting dog, with a thick snow-white coat and pricked ears. We named him "Kam," and brought him eventually back to England, where he lost his good nature, and became so fierce that no one dared approach him. Having been constantly fed on salmon, he refused for a long time any other food, and the change of climate and habits produced a disastrous effect upon him.

The neighbouring hamlet, Stary-Ostrog, only four versts distant, so I was informed, was never visited by mosquitoes, whilst they swarmed at Khutôr. This curious fact, like many others in nature, remains as

yet unexplained; if only the cause of this anomaly could be detected, it might lead to the abolition of that curse of the country. In the evening we witnessed a haul of fish, consisting of *krasnaia*, *haiko*, and *garbuska* (hump-back salmon), but the fisherman confirmed the statement of the inhabitants of Koriak, that his supplies were not half so abundant



THE AUTHOR'S DOG, "KAM."

as those of previous years. Before dinner I found Vasska bargaining with some of our dismissed party for the gall-bladders of the bears we had killed. He was purchasing them by the weight, at a price of six roubles (twelve shillings) per pound, and bought twenty roubles' worth of them. He undoubtedly made a profit out of this, for we watched him later disposing of them at a much higher price. The

contents of these bladders are greatly appreciated in China, being used as a cure for special diseases. Vasska would never lose his chance, and well knew what he was about.

Next morning we found three double canoes, lashed in pairs, ready to carry us down to the mouths of the



THE START FROM KHUTÔR.

Avatcha; wooden boards, fastened across by the care of the General, afforded us comfortable seats between the piled-up luggage. The day was clear, and lovely the view of the great Koriak volcano and other high ranges opposite, as we glided silently down the swift current of the stream; this time no exertion was needed on the part of the men, who had nothing to do but to steer. Kam sat joyfully at the head of

the dug-out, wagging his tail with contentment, and apparently none the sadder for having left his home for ever. The same distance which had required twelve hours' incessant struggle up-stream was now insensibly done in three. At nine a.m. we were quite astonished to find ourselves off the fishing hamlet



DOWN THE AVATCHA RIVER IN DOUBLE DUG-OUTS.

of Avatcha; as the General had foreseen, the water at the bar was shallower than usual. It took the men at least an hour to drag our rafts over the sand, and when we were finally afloat again in the bay, the boats we expected to await us were nowhere to be seen. Silly, who had been sent to Petropavlovsk for them, had probably lost his way, or stopped for a rest

in one of the villages.* The sea being smooth, it was decided that we should be punted on by the men, following the line of the coast. But this slow mode of advance implied several hours' delay, and it was not till noon that we reached in this manner a small



OUR BAGGAGE (DOWN THE AVATCHA RIVER).

fishing settlement called Seroglassky (which in Russian means "grey eyes"). From this place we caught sight of a launch towing a couple of boats across the

* We also wrongfully attributed the delay to Silly's inclination for the bottle ; but the General told us that the sale of strong spirits was strictly prohibited by the Government throughout the whole of the peninsula—a measure which cannot be too highly praised. Had it not been for that regulation, the natives would have entirely died out from drink.

bay, and heading towards the mouth of the Avatcha ; our message had evidently reached its destination. We consequently tied our handkerchiefs and capes to the ends of the poles and began waving them and signalling desperately to the people on the launch. Although several miles separated us, our efforts were crowned with success, and presently the steamer turned in our direction. The Ispravnik in person was on board, and heartily greeted us back ; our belongings were soon transported, and the whole party safely reached Petropavlovsk in the afternoon. Camp was once more pitched on the memorable sand-spit, part of which had now been turned into a coal depôt, numerous Corean coolies being engaged in unloading the *Tsitsikar*, a large collier, anchored in the outer harbour.

The captain of that steamer had brought news of the serious troubles which had broken out in China ; he had informed the Ispravnik that war had been declared against the Celestial Empire by the joint Powers, in consequence of the murder of the German representative in Pekin ; that the forts of Taku had been stormed by the European troops, and that the Chinese Imperial Army had united with the Boxers in a drawn battle, wherein 1,700 Russians and 10,000 Chinamen had been killed. Though events seemed

exaggerated, and the source of this unexpected news lacked authenticity, we could not help thinking that some important disturbance had taken place, and that our projected trip to Amurland into the Khingan was likely to fall through. This only encouraged further attempts to secure trophies of Kamchatkan bighorn, and a fresh plan dawned upon us. A small steamer of the Seal Fisheries Co., the *Kotik*, bound for the Commander Islands, lay at present off Petropavlovsk; if only the skipper could be induced to drop us, on his way, at Cape Shipounsky, the captain of the *Tsitsikar* might call for us at that place ten days later, when he intended to start back to Nikolaievsk. The Ispravnik volunteered to carry on the negotiations with both captains, whilst we laid in stores for the journey. To our great vexation, though the former was quite willing to land us at Morjovoi Bay (Walrus Bay), close to the coveted promontory, the skipper of the *Tsitsikar* would not listen to any proposal, and flatly declined to steer a single mile out of his route, alleging that he had no instructions whatever on the subject, that the weather might prevent him from entering an unsheltered bay, which was not even marked on the chart, and that he was due on a fixed date at Ta-lien-Wan, being tied by an important contract for timber. Thus vanished

our last hopes of shooting along the coasts of Kamchatka.

The season was now advancing, and time had come to take measures for our return journey, as we were told that no more ships would call again before next year. The *Baikal* was expected every day from Nijni-Kamchatsk, but the prospects of a month's cruise on that steamer, which was to visit all the ports of the Okhotsk Sea before going back to Vladivostok, was no pleasant prospect. Our sole remaining chance was the *Tsitsikar*, so we seized the opportunity, and securing accommodation on board, booked to Nikolaievsk, a town lying at the mouth of the Amur opposite the island of Sakhalin. In the meanwhile we had ten days at our disposal before the final departure.

Our friend the Ispravnik paid us a visit in the evening, and confided to us that during our absence there had been serious alarm at Petropavlovsk. Several Japanese schooners, chartered by the Seal Fisheries Co., happened to be sailing in the bay at the time; a quarrel having taken place between one of the inhabitants and a Jap, the former had come to the Ispravnik with the report that the Japanese had big guns on board their schooners, and that they were about to make an attack on the town, with the object

of raiding the Government House, where they knew that a large sum of money was collected from local taxes and the recent sale of skins. On hearing of this the Ispravnik had mustered all the men he could find—about eighty in number—with rifles and ammunition. These improvised troops had waited all night



NATIVE METHOD OF STEERING ON THE AVATCHA RIVER.

under arms ready to repel the Japanese fleet, and expecting the enemy every moment. But no one had stirred, and the alarm proved to be wholly unjustified, for on the following day a minute inspection of the schooners showed the entire absence of guns of any kind on board. He added that at one time he had greatly regretted our absence, as reinforcements on our part would have been most valuable “for the

defence of Russian interests." Such was the farce which we were very sorry not to have witnessed. In the course of conversation I directed the Ispravnik's attention to the proceedings of the Seal Fisheries Co., so detrimental in every respect to the native population. To this he replied that he had already drafted a report on the subject, which he was about to submit to the Governor at Vladivostok, whose decision could in no event be made public before next summer. In the meanwhile the unhappy Kamchadales would have to starve, and Heaven only knows how they got through that winter. While Vasska was preparing dinner (the wretch was now in great terror of being skinned alive, his countrymen being at war with Russia, and everyone threatening him), we walked along the beach, and witnessed an uncommonly good haul just outside the harbour. More than two hundred *haiko*, averaging 10 lbs., were caught in a quarter of an hour. Close to us seals (which the natives call *nerpa*) kept popping their heads out of the water, and diving away at our sight.

Snow had by this time entirely disappeared from the surrounding hills, and the same strong southerly wind blew incessantly from nine a.m. to six p.m., when a dead calm ensued. That night we slept soundly, free from anxiety respecting our journey

home. But success had so far not equalled our expectations, and it was not without a feeling of despair that I met next morning the General in company with



EASY ADVANCE DOWN THE AVATCHA RIVER.

an inhabitant of Petropavlovsk, named Podprougine, who said that he knew of a neighbouring range of hills south of Avatcha Bay, where his son had come across sheep in the previous year, and which could

possibly be reached, if only the river was fordable, in a couple of days. I naturally jumped at the proposal, and clung to it as a wrecked sailor clings to a floating spar. There still remained more than a week before our collier would start, and such a providential chance might involve a turn of the tide.

Nikolai Podprougine was a Siberian by birth, a native of Irkutsk, which he had left thirty years previously with a small party of colonists to seek his fortune in Kamchatka, where the Government had granted to the new-comers special privileges, with a view of cultivating land and growing corn on that inhospitable peninsula. Owing to the severe climate, ploughing implements had to be abandoned for more lucrative occupation, such as hunting and fishing, and my new companion had in former days frequently pursued sable and bear. He specially boasted of his close relationship with the late Archbishop Innocent of Irkutsk, who had since been canonised, and whose reputation as a saint was in his lifetime universally recognised through the whole of Siberia. Nikolai had none of his uncle's vocation ; after settling down at Petropavlovsk he started fur-trading on a small scale, acquiring in this manner comparative ease. Besides owning one of the best houses in the "town," he was the proprietor of a "villa" in the country (he called

it his *datcha*), a mile beyond the Paratunka River, close to the settlement of Kluchi, where a natural hot spring spouted out of his very garden. Here he proposed to accompany me, whilst his son would guide us up the nullah. Littledale, who was rather sceptical as to the result of this expedition, yet wishful, on the other hand, that I should obtain a trophy, decided to remain at Petropavlovsk with my wife. I immediately applied to the Ispravnik with the request to send for ponies to meet me the following day on the opposite shore of the bay; a messenger was sent to Kluchi, and on the morning of the 25th of July I bade farewell to my companions. My boat, with the General and myself and as few stores and baggage as possible, was towed across Avatcha Bay by the Government launch. At eight a.m. we landed safely at the mouth of the Paratunka and found ponies and men from Kluchi already awaiting us. Loads were soon distributed and packed on the horses, whilst I rode on, Nikolai leading the way. The path was a good one, denoting a fair amount of traffic, and taking us through a thick birch forest, brought us to a picturesque little lake, across which Podprougine punted us in his dug-out, while the rest of the caravan proceeded to make a circuit by land. On the other side of the lake a small stream, hardly seven yards

broad, flows out of it ; this is a valuable tributary of the Paratunka,* for in summer it swarms with salmon, which come up to spawn in the lake, and feed a whole settlement through which we passed a few miles beyond, witnessing on our way an uncommonly large run of *krasnaia* fish.

On reaching the banks of the Paratunka, about thirty yards wide at that place, with a fast current and a channel ten feet deep, we found a primitive-looking raft, which was punted across by our guide, the weight of our baggage and swiftness of the stream almost swamping us in the middle. The ponies were pushed into the river and swam obediently to the other side, where they were reloaded. Heavy clouds had by this time gathered overhead, and the first drops of a steady downpour, which was to last two long days without intermission, greeted us as we crossed the small level tundra in sight of the village of Kluchi. Torrents of rain had already wetted us to the skin before we entered Nikolai's country house, at one p.m., after a short march of twelve versts. Kluchi is a small settlement, inhabited by a few

* Dr. Guillemard, by mistake, calls that river the "Paraminka": the reason of this is evident. He had probably seen the name written down in Russian, and the *my* in the middle of the word corresponds to the English *tu*.

families, and well situated at the foot of the first slopes leading up to the Velutcha volcano. It consists of a dozen log-built huts, of which my friend's was by far the most luxurious one, and owes its local celebrity to the hot springs, which are used not only



SALMON CAUGHT IN TRAP AT KLUCHI.

by the natives, but also by the district authorities for bathing purposes, being supposed to cure every kind of disease. Wooden roofs have been constructed over them to afford the *Kurgäste* a semblance of comfort in this primitive *Kurort*. Classical concerts were replaced by the howling of sledge-dogs, mud-baths

could be had in the middle of the street, and the absence of doctors greatly facilitated the treatment.

Weather forbidding further advance, I put up for the night at Nikolai's villa, where the drawing-room could boast of a spring sofa and an old stained piano. Numerous unframed photographs were nailed to the walls; amongst them was one representing a British naval officer, and was signed "E. R. Benson, R.N." My host told me that he had received it as a souvenir of a memorable bear hunt in the neighbourhood. Nikolai's son was engaged to accompany us on the following day to the head of the valley of the Bystraia, an affluent of the Paratunka, not to be confounded with the river of the same name, on which lies Ganál; the meaning of the word being "swift" in Russian, and most of the streams in Kamchatka flowing with a fast current, that epithet is common to many a river of the peninsula. Round the settlement I was struck by the sight of attempts at cultivation on a much larger scale: almost every hut owned a vegetable garden, and Nikolai's enclosure was quite a model one in this respect, yielding potato, cabbage, and carrots—a pleasant contrast with the uncultivated surroundings of the villages in the interior. This was, of course, due to the hot springs and to the constant higher temperature both in winter and summer, as

Nikolaï said, adding that his warming apparatus was superior to those of civilised countries, for his hot bath was always ready for him at any moment and any time of year, and his taps never out of order. His son, who had been to the hills last autumn, informed me that wild sheep, and particularly rams, would come over now and again from the sea cliffs, but that they were by no means plentiful, and that shooting one was a question of luck. He said that it was doubtful whether we should succeed in fording the river, which overflows its banks during the summer on account of the melting snows, and gloomily watched the rain outside pouring steadily down.

Next morning, when I arose at three, a nasty damp fog lay thick on the tundra, turning presently into drizzling rain. Nevertheless, I gave orders to start, and sent for the ponies. But the men peremptorily declined to go, and showed their bad will in every way. Our guide agreed with the natives, saying that we should all be soaked in the tall grass we had to pass through, and that the river would be too deep for the pack-horses. Again the departure was necessarily postponed and a valuable day wasted. In the meantime Nikolaï managed to induce his son to go and inspect the ford on the Bystraia; in the afternoon he returned, after six hours' ride, with the

report that water was high and the current extremely strong, involving the risk of drowning our ponies. To my disgust steady rain continued all day, and we decided, in consequence, to proceed on the morrow up another nullah, that of the Paratunka, where no crossing was needed, but where the ground was not so favourable for game.

In the evening, as I sat pondering over my misfortunes, a native brought me a magnificent pair of caribou antlers, which I taped and found to measure over sixty inches. This reindeer had been killed by him last spring in the immediate vicinity of the village. He also showed me a huge bear-skin, of a light yellow colour, with a darker line down the back; the head itself was absolutely white. He asked fifty roubles for it, saying that one seldom met with such a specimen, and that he had tracked the animal over a fortnight before securing him on the spurs of the Velutcha. I thought he rather overestimated the value of the skin, and refused to give him such a high price, whereupon he said I could take it for nothing; this I likewise declined to do. Later I forgot all about it, and greatly regretted not having bought such an uncommon variety of a Kamchatkan bear. Before dinner I took an invigorating hot bath in Nikolai's premises, and noticed, to my

delight, that the clouds were clearing, and that patches of blue sky were visible through the grey veil of the mist. A hard frost had set in during the night, and it was bitterly cold when I came out of the hut at four a.m. The weather had cleared. The flat stretch of tundra before me was now as white as a snowfield, and a light vapour still hung over the river beyond, soon to be dissolved by the rays of the rising sun. Though the men strongly advised me to abandon the Bystraia valley for that of the Paratunka, saying that the road was bad, and that we should very likely all be drowned at the crossing of the river, I decided, nevertheless, to stick to my first plan, and try the former. Some vague instinct prompted me towards this apparently unreasonable resolution, and it proved later to be highly successful.

We left Kluchi at five, with four men and as many ponies, besides the General and Nikolai's son, acting as guide. The path lay through birch woods and high grass, the latter hiding us entirely at places, horses and all, drenching us with the previous day's rain and dew before we had gone half a mile from the village. We proceeded in this manner for a couple of hours before entering the nullah. Here the underwood grew thicker and the slopes more precipitous; the path being no longer visible, our

guide led the way through the clearer spaces in the forest. Presently we came to the banks of the river, which forked at that place in two separate channels. We found no difficulty in crossing the first one, which seemed but a sidewater, but the main stream was exceedingly swift, and, judging by the submerged willows on the other side, in a state of flood. Young Nikolai bravely pushed his horse in, followed by the packs, but hardly had he waded on a few yards when his pony lost its footing, and started swimming at the mercy of the current, landing on the opposite bank some distance below. This example was imitated by the other horses, who managed eventually to reach their destination, though not without a previous thorough damping of our baggage. One of them, attempting to land at a spot where the bank was higher, was carried back into the stream by the weight of its load, and had to be hauled out by the men a hundred yards lower down, with my soaked bedding. It was lucky the pony was not drowned in its struggles, entangled as it was in the straps. The game, however, was won, and unbounded our satisfaction when we resumed our journey an hour later. At times the scrub became so dense that it was necessary to cut our way through with an axe as well as with the aid of our hunting-

knives. More than once our guide lost the track, when again the axe had to be applied. At noon I caught a glimpse of a broad semicircle of crags towering above vast open corries at the head of the valley, together with numerous gullies filled up with snow, running down steeply from the foot of the rocks.

It was not before two p.m. that we halted, after a twenty-mile march, on a nice flat lawn by the stream, and pitched our camp in the wood, within a few miles of our ground, further advance with the pack-horses being impossible. Leaving the caravan men to put up the tents, I started off with the General for a preliminary survey of the country, and with a view to investigate the more likely ground for the next day. Ascending a lateral ravine, it took us at least two hours to reach the first patches of snow, both on account of the low situation of the camp (500 feet above sea-level) and greater elevation of the snow-line in comparison with the interior of the peninsula. The mountain scenery here bore a striking resemblance to that of the Ganál range, and the volcanic composition of the pinnacles and rocks appeared to me identical; they differed only in shape. We proceeded to the top of a pass between the crags and inspected a huge stretch of snowfields beyond. Several fresh

tracks, however, indicated the presence of wild sheep, and on spying more carefully I discovered a fair-sized ram—the largest I had as yet seen—walking slowly up a ridge. As he stood on the skyline, about two miles westwards, I could see that he carried quite a good head, and so decided, in consultation with the General, to make, next morning, straight for that place.

We returned to camp late in the evening, finding the tents well smoked against mosquitoes, which had never ceased harassing us since our arrival. I turned in early that night, and found the weather bright at four a.m., when I mounted my steed to save a long climb on foot to the timber-line. The temperature was chilly as we threaded the nullah through alder scrub and dwarf cedars to the foot of the precipitous ridge which ran down from the main spine, separating the higher ground at the head of the valley in two large *cul-de-sacs*. Here I dismounted, and taking with me the General, began a desperate scramble up a slope, which, at places, was as steep as could be, and the long grass, wet with the morning dew, drenched us both to the waist. As we advanced mosquitoes came out with the sun and gathered round us in swarms. We soon reached, in this tiresome companionship, the rhododendron and moss zone, and settling down to

spy, soon made out a herd of sheep coming over a ridge to our left. It was impossible as yet to distinguish their sex, so we continued uphill to the summit of a knoll at an altitude of 3,000 feet. In the meanwhile the sheep had descended from the top of the ridge and lain down on a snowfield, where, being more conspicuous, they proved to be young rams, three of which carried average heads. Unfortunately, they seemed restless, for we saw them a few minutes later trot off again and lie down some eight hundred yards below us in a perfectly unstalkable position at the edge of the snow; they presently once more got up, as if pursued by an invisible foe, and moved towards the foot of the rocks. I now understood the reason of their troubles, for I could plainly watch the wretched animals trying to bury themselves as deep as they could in the snow, worried as they were by the merciless mosquitoes. It was a quaint sight to see them hiding their faces in the snow, kicking as much as they could of it over their backs, and struggling nervously with their hind-quarters. Another herd came in view at that moment—ewes and young ones this time, also protecting themselves in a similar way. They had all by this time got rid of their winter coats, and were in clean summer grey livery. The only side from which our rams could be approached was that of

the perpendicular cliffs, and a nice grassy boulder just above the place where they lay would have afforded me an easy shot. But the question was how to get there. The wind being favourable—straight uphill—and midges becoming intolerable, I put an end to our council of war by starting up the ridge towards the gloomy higher rocks, intending to find a gully down which we might descend.

The General was most sceptical as to the result of this enterprise. Having safely reached the summit of the divide and carefully located our quarry, we proceeded to look for a more practicable ravine, and for an hour could not find a single gully which we could venture to descend; there were nothing but sheer precipices, or vertical snow-shoots, on which a bird could scarcely alight. At last the General discovered a narrow gorge, down which we unhesitatingly started, little knowing what awaited us below. Words are powerless to describe the places which we had to negotiate during the most acrobatic bit of mountaineering I have ever performed. The descent, one foot against the cliff and the other against a wall of ice, with a dark, fathomless crevasse gaping between, and not the smallest ledge for a foothold within reach, was no common trial. We alighted in this manner on the top of a perpendicular snow-slide, where the General

produced a reindeer-hide strap, which we tied round our waists, and proceeded downwards with the utmost care over hardened snow, my companion making steps in front as he advanced, whilst I waited behind in a position of marvellous equilibrium, keeping the line as taut as possible between us, and gradually loosening it for the next step. At times bits of rock which we clung to would detach themselves and go thundering down the gully many hundred yards below with the roar of an avalanche, threatening to disturb our sheep. It took us over two hours, which seemed two centuries to us, to reach the patch of grass marked by me as being within range of the animals, and when I looked up and saw the gorge we had just descended, I was not sorry to think it belonged to the past. As for the General, he had surpassed himself once more on this occasion. Incredible as it may appear, after all the noise we had so involuntarily made, on peeping over a knob I found the herd in the same place, entirely unsuspecting.

At that moment the General, who was creeping up behind me, caught me by the sleeve, pointing to a couple of young rams which stood intently watching our proceedings a few yards above us, and slowly marched off whilst I was hastily picking out my victim. Mosquitoes had never ceased to worry

us the whole way, and as I had parted with my gauze net and gloves in the excitement of the stalk, my face and hands felt as if they had been in a clump of nettles. Moreover, as I was taking my aim at the larger of the three rams which now lay two hundred yards away, those tiresome insects kept settling in thousands on the rifle, preventing me from seeing the sights; it was not before I had brushed them several times off the barrels with my hand that I could attempt a shot. I fired at last, and a well-known thud announced that the bullet had reached its mark. The ram sprang up instantly, while the rest of the herd dashed downhill, and a second bullet knocked him head over heels on the snow. The others having by this time disappeared round a corner, we scrambled down to the dead sheep, which I taped on the spot, and found the head to measure $35\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $14\frac{1}{2}$ girth. The coat was of a uniform dark grey colour with lighter tinges on the face, under the belly, and round the legs. This was my first successful day in Kamchatka, and great was my feeling of relief as we descended that evening towards camp carrying our well-earned trophy. The hills being lower than those of Ganál, we had found the sheep here at an altitude of 4,000 feet; it is quite possible that we had come upon their summer residence, and that their winter

quarters were along the sea-coast, where food is more abundant for them at that time of year. Their sight, I thought, could not compete with that of their kindred in other countries, either owing to the constant glare of the snowfields, to which they invariably betake themselves, or possibly on account of their rarely seeing man. We reached camp at seven p.m. amidst general rejoicing, and decided to inspect on the following day fresh ground, where we little expected to find our efforts so liberally rewarded.

CHAPTER VII.

Views of the Natchiki valley and the Ganál range—Wild sheep sighted—A difficult stalk—Two shot, with fine heads—A festive evening—Accident to a pack-horse—Forest fires—Extraordinary fishing at Paratunka—Hundreds of salmon trapped in a day—Littledale tries for a rise with the spoon-bait—A native of Irkutsk—His pathetic story—Ride to Tareinska inlet, *en route* for Petropavlovsk—Sable skins bought—On board the *Yakut*—A ship sighted proved to be the *Baikal* delayed by fog—Avatcha Bay and the “Three Sisters” rocks—A sugar-loaf mountain among the Kuriles—Crossing the Sea of Okhotsk—Three days’ fog—Whales and swordfish—Reach the island of Sakhalin and La Pérouse Straits—Enter the Gulf of Tartary—A magnificent sunrise—View of the coast of Asia—Barracouta lighthouse and the Stanovoi Mountains—Stop in De Castries Bay to pick up two pilots—Narrow winding channel between sandbanks to Nikolaievsk—Danger of running aground—Anchor at length off Nikolaievsk—Innumerable fish stores—Millions of salmon and *keta* (*Corregonus ceta*) salted and smoked for exportation—Fresh news of the China War—An inquisitive crowd—On board the *Cesarevitch* for Blagovestchensk—The village of Malmyjskoie and its “bear-worship”—Gale at Khabarovsk, and numerous wrecks—Further war news—At Blagovestchensk in eight days, six hundred miles—Picturesqueness of the Amur river—Reach Stretensk and speedily leave by train for Moscow, *en route* for St. Petersburg and home.

IT is a saying with French sportsmen, “*à la chasse tout arrive excepté ce que l'on attend.*” Never was that saying better confirmed than on the 30th day of July, when the General and I left camp at four a.m.

for fresh ground in a north-westerly direction. There were now but few days remaining before the departure of our steamer, and as it was of vital importance to us not to miss it, I had resolved, in any case, to start back for Petropavlovsk on the following day, especially as the Bystraia was in flood and might seriously delay our return. This was, therefore, to be my last attempt in Kamchatka. We rode up the valley, leaving the ponies at the same junction of the two small streams, and struck a deep ravine to the right. Giving a decided preference to the hardened snow, up which we advanced, as compared with the dense alder brush on either side, we reached at eight a.m. a saddle on the main ridge at an elevation of 3,000 feet. From there we obtained a good view of the surroundings, and could plainly distinguish, on the distant background, both the broad valley of Natchiki and part of the Ganál range beyond. Here I began to spy over a huge corrie which lay to the north, but finding no vestige of game, I turned my glass more westwards, and discovered five specks a couple of miles off, moving slowly across a snowfield at the foot of some precipitous high cliffs; the General thought they were rams, so we instantly dropped into a gully and made for another saddle opposite, in order to get a closer and better look at the animals. On reaching this

point of observation I found that not only was my companion right, but also that two of the sheep carried magnificent heads, the other three being smaller ones. Presently, as we lay in wait, I saw two of the younger rams separate from the herd and settle down on the snow, while their elders moved on and alighted eventually, about a mile below, on an outstanding mass of rock. Here they stopped, and I could watch the two splendid rams lazily stretching their limbs, chewing their cud, and preparing for a long siesta. But this was by no means satisfactory, for they presently lay down in that impregnable position, round which the vast stretch of snow afforded no possible hiding within a radius of at least three hundred yards. They could feel perfectly safe, and an approach from behind the ridge would fail to bring us within a reasonable range. In this dilemma, and certain, as we were, that they would not shift from their position before evening, most probably returning on their own tracks and being lost to me for ever, I decided upon a daring effort. I had noticed a small hollow beneath us which could shelter me to a gently sloping knoll at the edge of the snow, where I should find myself, as I thought, about three hundred yards from the animals, and then rely on a steady aim. The sheep might fail to locate the shot, and give

me several chances before they were out of reach. Such was my desperate plan, and my companion's numerous objections to it were useless to make me abandon it. I must do the General justice to say that whenever I formed a resolution not in accordance with his ideas, he always did his very best to carry it out successfully, where others would have proceeded reluctantly, and would have hoped for a failure.

The heat by this time had become intense, and mosquitoes were highly troublesome. In order to accomplish my plan it was necessary to creep down the slope in full view of the animals, a *détour* being of no avail on account of the snow which lay around and made us all the more conspicuous. Here, at least, we could descend cautiously against the rocks, and my previous experience of their comparatively poor sight contributed to facilitate the task. The descent seemed interminable, as we crawled down on all fours, occasionally putting up the glass to watch the sheep, and crouching motionless whenever one of them turned his head in our direction. It took us certainly an hour and a half to negotiate this dangerous approach before we found ourselves out of view, and breathed a sigh of relief when a last look through the Zeiss showed us the animals as calm and unsuspecting as ever. We now dashed across the hollow, and a few minutes later

reached the terminus of our stalk, for further advance meant certain detection. As I carefully peeped over the small boulder, I found the rams at the same place about three hundred and fifty yards away. They seemed as yet too far for a safe shot, and on consulting the General, who was busy brushing off mosquitoes from his face and cap, he shrugged his shoulders as if to say that he would assume no responsibility whatever in the question, and that it was folly to fire at such a distance. Nevertheless, I resolved to take the chance, my self-reliance being put to so severe a test. Raising the two-hundred-yard sight and drawing a full bead, I took a steady aim at the biggest ram and fired. The three animals stood up instantaneously and dashed frantically towards us, while the echo of the report still resounded in the gullies below. None of them seemed hurt by my first shot, as I watched them approaching. When they were well within a hundred yards of my rifle, again I pressed the trigger, dropping the first one dead, while I finished off the second ram, which slid down the snow to the bottom of the corrie. I must here confess that in my excitement I was unable to withhold another shot at the third animal—a four-year old—as he was disappearing over the skyline, but luckily missed him clean. As I taped them on the spot, I found that their measurements ex-

ceeded my expectations ($39\frac{1}{4}$ inches by $14\frac{1}{2}$ and $38\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $14\frac{1}{2}$). Curiously enough, my first bullet at long range had entered a horn of the second one, splitting the tip, and must have undoubtedly stunned him. The General's joy was beyond description, as he



THE BEST HEAD OBTAINED BY THE AUTHOR.

pushed the animal down the slope to join his fallen companion. He proceeded to skin them both, and strapping the heads round his neck, saying they were no weight, started down that same ravine towards camp, where we were met by the triumphant cheers of our men. Thus ended in a bright halo of success my last day's shooting on Kamchatkan soil. Dinner that

night was prepared by Cristo, and the men's feast lasted, I believe, until the early hours of morn.*

Pondering over the recent events, I could not help recalling the fact that in ordinary circumstances I should have waited till evening for the sheep to get up and feed to some place where a stalk was possible, the result of which might have been a failure. Here, on the contrary, reason had given place to temerity, and a transgression of the laws of stalking had been the very cause of success, for neither wind nor distance had been taken into consideration. Next morning a general retreat to Petropavlovsk was sounded, and at five a.m. my pack-ponies were already winding their way down that memorable valley of the Bystraia in a deluge of rain, whilst a heavy mist concealed the hilltops, and dark clouds sweeping on from the coast predicted a break-up of the weather. I had just managed to hit upon the right time. Soon after the start, one of the horses, while trying to overtake another on a steep bank, struck against a tree with its load, and rolled over a man, seriously injuring him in the thigh. Having gone half-way, we halted in the wood to rest the ponies, and lit fires to dry ourselves.

On resuming the march, I was struck by the great

* I found the meat of bighorn excellent, and without any flavour of mutton or even of venison ; I thought it more nearly resembled beef.

care which natives take to extinguish every trace of fire in the smouldering ashes by pouring water on to it and trampling over it with their feet; this they do for the protection of their forests, whose value they thoroughly understand. The numerous fires we came across in Amurland were mostly due to the carelessness of the inhabitants, who will sorely regret it in the near future. In Kamchatka we never saw trace of a forest fire.

We recrossed the river, which we found no deeper than before, without accident, and reached Kluchi in the afternoon. There I learnt from Podprougine that my wife and Littledale had come to visit the hot springs, and were now at the settlement of Paratunka. I accordingly decided to proceed no further that day, and to return to Petropavlosk with my companions.

An hour later, on nearing the hamlet, I found a large party gathered to watch the miraculous fishing in the small stream which flows out of the lake. Besides Littledale and my wife, Tallent was there taking snapshots, as well as the doctor of the *Yakut*, who had returned from his cruise in the north. This time I was proud to show my trophies, which were attentively examined by the whole party. The doctor had brought back most interesting photographs of the Anadyr and Providence Bay country, and told me that wild sheep

inhabited those regions, though they had seen none, but had picked up the skull of one at the foot of the hills. I was also informed by him that they had met a Russo-American gold-prospecting expedition under M. Bogdanovitch, who had as yet failed to strike ore



WATCHING A SHOAL OF SALMON.

along the furthestmost northern coast, though the soil was supposed to be auriferous and similar to that round the newly discovered Cape Nome washings in Alaska.

As we stood by the salmon trap fixed across the stream, at that part barely eight yards broad, we were all amazed at the quantity of fish coming up in shoals,

rising one over the other in a compact mass. The *krasnaiä*, whose shining violet backs we could easily distinguish, owing to the clearness of the water, kept pushing each other on, forming a regular up-stream wave, which broke through the opening in the spikes



REMOVING FISH FROM TRAP AT KLUCHI.

ready to receive them. Over fifteen hundred fish had been already caught that day, and thousands more were ascending the torrent, filling the trap every few minutes, and giving work to the men, who had hardly time to gaff them. At least five hundred salmon were thrown out before us in this manner. Other natives, who

stood on the bank, proceeded to divide the catch between the five or six families who owned shares in it, by distributing the fish into corresponding wooden partitions, each of which belonged to one of the families of the settlement, in proportion to the number of their



DEALING OUT THE CATCH AT KLUCHI.

members, men receiving twice as much as women. On Sundays and holidays, which are numerous in the Orthodox Church, the traps are lifted by common consent, affording the salmon a free passage to the lake where they spawn—a necessary measure, with a view to keep up the stock. Littledale tried in vain to get a rise

out of them with the spoon bait, but failing to do so, he foul-hooked a dozen fish, which made a desperate fight of it. The hamlet which owned this important fishery was quite a small place, consisting of a few log huts, the most primitive we had seen, some of them



SALMON TRAP LEFT OPEN ON SUNDAY (KLUCHI).

built on four stumps to avoid the high snow or deep mud, coarsely cut steps in wooden logs being fixed at the entrance of each hut and used as ladders.

One of the fishermen especially attracted our attention by his lofty stature and sad expression. I noticed that he did most of the work, having been

hired by the inhabitants for the season, and receiving a few fish in payment. I learned from him the tragic story of his life, which he related in a few broken



A STAIRCASE AT KLUCHI.

words. He was a native of Irkutsk, and had left home as a youth, together with a party of compatriots, enticed by the alluring promises of the Government, to seek fortune in Kamchatka, where

each colonist was to be supplied with horses, cows, and necessary agricultural implements for cultivation. Moreover, each family was to receive 500 roubles



AN OLD FISHERMAN AT KLUCHI.

(£50) for the journey. Vast areas of land were to be liberally allotted them for farming purposes, and for the first seven years they were to be free from all Government duties and taxes. Twenty-five families had responded to this appeal, and, having sold all their

belongings, emigrated to Kamchatka, where they settled down in the interior. But corn would not grow, and neither the promised money was paid nor



REMOVING SALMON FROM TRAP (KLUCHI).

the implements delivered to them, having probably remained in the hands of the officials. All their demands proved useless. The unfortunate colonists fell into the utmost poverty, and scattered throughout

the different settlements of the peninsula in search of employment. Hoping to find work and means of subsistence, the relater of this sad story had left his family in the north and come to Petropavlovsk, where he had earned a few roubles. He had then returned to his



PIT IN WHICH SALMON ARE STORED FOR WINTER.

home in the neighbourhood of the Tolbachinsky volcano, and had found his log cabin nailed up. During his absence both his wife and children had died of starvation! Penniless and without family or a roof over his head, he was now destined in his old age to lead a wandering life. It was all right, he added, when

the summer fisheries yielded work, but when long winter months would come on, finding him without food or shelter, then in truth life would become a burden to him, and he had often longed for death to put an end to his misery.

We rode back to the shores of Tareinska inlet, where we were met by the launch which awaited us. My luggage was soon on board, and, crossing the bay, we reached Petropavlovsk late at night, where for the last time I found myself encamped on the edge of the monument. The *Tsitsikar* had by this time almost finished unloading its cargo, and was to start in two days for Nikolaievsk. We spent these in packing up our belongings and taking numerous parting snapshots round the bay. Podprougine came in on the following morning with a couple of sable skins for sale; he was constantly on the look-out for "business," and, as I was greatly indebted to him for my last trophies, I purchased the pelts for thirty roubles apiece. We dined that evening on board the *Yakut*, whose jolly captain gave us vivid accounts of his cruise to Providence Bay; and the gramophone once more resounded in the cabin.

Next morning a ship was sighted in the distance, and the howling of dogs and village boys greeted her appearance. This was the *Baikal*, now ten days over-

due, which presently steamed into the harbour. We were all delighted to see again our friend the captain, who told us that he had been delayed a fortnight off Nijni-Kamchatsk on account of the prevailing fog. Moreover, owing to the dangerous bar at the mouths of the river as well as to the strong current (eleven knots an hour), he had met with great difficulty in landing his supplies, the more so as he had no launch on board, and the unloading had to be done with the aid of small boats, resulting in a great loss of time. He had also visited the Anadyr and Korff bays, where he had safely landed Dr. Bogoraz and his wife. He informed us that he would never have been able to pick us up on the coast, on account of the stormy weather outside. Had we insisted on carrying out our former plan to try Cape Shipounsky, we might have had to spend the winter in Kamchatka! He was at present bound for the ports of the Sea of Okhotsk, and though we regretted to part with so obliging a captain, there was no choice between a week's or a month's journey by sea. I should mention that the crew we had sent down the coast had duly reached Asatcha inlet, and had returned a few days previously, bringing back half a dozen heads of young rams which the men had shot for meat, and saying that they had come across large herds of sheep in the immediate neigh-

bourhood of the sea. On the morning of August the 4th we bade a hearty farewell to all our Kamchatkan friends, including the *Ispravnik* and General, whose assistance had proved so valuable in every respect, and to whom we left the greater part of our impedimenta, a small tent and a stove, which were specially appreciated. Crossing over on board the *Tsitsikar* at nine a.m., we weighed anchor half an hour later, and steaming slowly out of Petropavlovsk harbour, soon lost sight of the village. A light south-easterly breeze met us at the entrance of Avatcha Bay, as we advanced off the Tri Sestry (literally "three sisters"), three rocks which rise from the waters like sentinels at the gates of the bay, and project out into the open sea. Farewell, Kamchatka!

In the afternoon a strong westerly wind sprang up, followed by a heavy roll of the ship over the dark blue waves. The view of the coast was beautiful. This time the sun shone bright on the white cones of the volcanoes, and each ravine filled with snow was like a shining streak of light. The gloomy rocks above, with intermingled patches of emerald grass, stood out neatly defined against the sky, whilst the glittering foam of the angry ocean kept breaking at close intervals against the lower crags of the promontories.

The accommodation on board was anything but

comfortable. The ship being a collier, there were no passenger cabins ; the captain and first mate had given up their own cabins to us, which breathed no luxury. The larger one, for my wife and myself, possessed two



A COREAN TYPE ON THE S.S. "TSITSIKAR."

beds, with a side plank attached to each to prevent one from being thrown out, and a small washstand. There was so little room that two persons could not move about in it at the same time. The dining-saloon, though slightly more spacious, was constantly subject

to dreadful effluvia of oil and stale fish, which the crew, consisting mainly of Coreans, used for their food, and the greasy tablecloth and napkins contributed in no small degree to shorten our daily repasts. Fresh



A COREAN TYPE.

air could only be obtained on deck, where we took up our abode, never descending to the lower regions unless we could help it. The steamer pitched badly all night and a great part of the following day, when we caught a glimpse, towards evening, of a lofty

sugar-loaf-shaped mountain, which the captain told us was one of the Kuriles. We were crossing at that time the Fourth or Amphitrite Straits into the Sea of Okhotsk. The heavy swell which had accompanied us the first two days gradually smoothed down as we left the Pacific, and a dense fog set in, together with a nasty cold drizzle, which is the usual phenomenon at that time of year, and renders navigation so dangerous in that northern sea. The mist lasted three long, dreary days, with occasional rare intervals, until we neared the Straits of La Pérouse, between the Island of Sakhalin and Jesso.

Time seemed endless during this monotonous passage on board our providential collier; at times the thick, milky fog would partially clear, unveiling a mile or two of water round the ship, when we could perceive a few whales spouting or the sharp spike of a swordfish emerging between the waves. Our skipper was as silent as the other had been talkative, and the conversation on his part consisted of short and concise answers to our inquiries. As we mounted the deck on August the 8th he informed us that we were advancing at half-speed, and that if the mist did not lift he would have to stop the engine for fear of running ashore. According to his calculations, we were now off the south-east coast of

Sakhalin ; an hour later, as a gust of wind dispersed the fog, land was sighted to starboard, confirming the captain's words, and, fortunately, during the afternoon a northerly breeze sprang up unexpectedly, dissolving instantly the mist which had so long enveloped us. The dull sound of the foghorn ceased as if by enchantment, and we detected, some ten miles south, Cape Soya, the northernmost point of Jesso, while a dark strip of land on the opposite side—Cape Notoro—proved to us that we were in the middle of La Pérouse Straits. At six p.m. we entered the Gulf of Tartary,* and altering our course, steered in a due northerly direction. The temperature, damp and cold up to the present, suddenly changed, and we found ourselves sailing, comfortable and warm, under a clear blue sky.

The following morning we witnessed a magnificent sunrise, and were in full view of the coast of the Asiatic continent. We could plainly distinguish with our glasses its high cliffs, which at places rose

* The so-called Gulf of Tartary—in reality Straits of Tartary—was known as a “gulf” owing to the fact that Sakhalin had been considered, till the middle of last century, as being joined to the Asiatic mainland. After Admiral Nevelskoy had discovered, in the fifties, the mouths of the Amur, and founded the settlement of Nikolaievsk, he proceeded north with his fleet, and was greatly amazed to find an open sea where he expected every moment to sight land. His first exclamation on meeting Count Muravieff, when he returned, was “Sakhalin is an island !”

out of the sea, and the atmosphere was so clear that, although distant from land about eight miles, we could obtain a fair impression of the nature of the country. At two p.m. we sighted Barracouta lighthouse, behind which ran a high range of hills, probably a ramification of the Stanovois, some three thousand feet in altitude. The mountains were all covered with timber, consisting chiefly of larch, pine, and cedar, with open glades, and, at times, broad traces of wood fires. Large rocky boulders stood out in broken heaps, and the general aspect was that of likely ground for stag and roedeer. Towards evening our steamer passed off Cape Patience (*Мыс Терпуня*), which we could only perceive on the distant horizon, as we had steered further outside; the chart, indeed, pointed out that great caution should be observed in navigating this coast, which is as yet most imperfectly surveyed.

On waking up next morning at six o'clock we found that the ship had stopped, and, on looking out of the porthole, saw that we were within a few hundred yards of land. This was De Castries Bay, surrounded by wooded lowlands, and a few huts at the head of it denoted the presence of man. Here it was necessary to pick up a couple of pilots to guide us to Nikolaievsk through the narrow, winding channel between sandbanks formed by the incessant afflux of the Amur at a

distance of over one hundred miles. This channel is at places no more than a couple of fathoms deep—our steamer drawing eleven feet—and it requires great caution and no slight experience to negotiate this difficult passage and avoid running aground. We resumed our course an hour later, and, whilst one of the pilots was at the wheel, we proceeded to interview the other on the subject of the war, which, as he informed us, had assumed serious proportions. We learnt from him that Blagovestchensk had been bombarded by the Chinese; that Russian troops had only lately come to its relief, and had stormed the town of Aïgoun, on the opposite side; Chinese artillery, though at work for a fortnight, had done but little harm, and a Russian corps was at present occupied in clearing the Amur of the enemy. But the most alarming news for us was that all navigation had been practically closed along the river, where stray parties of Celestials continued to fire at the boats, which had now been chartered exclusively by the Government for the conveyance of troops to the front, implying for us the most unpleasant prospect of returning home *via* Vladivostok, Japan, and America—a prospect which required serious consideration. In this dilemma and intense anxiety we slowly wended our way between the sandy deposits of the Amur, and reaching early in the afternoon a small

promontory and fishing village at its foot, entered the mouths of the river. From here, a distance of twenty-five miles across the broad gulf brought us to Nikolaievsk, off which we anchored in mid-river three-quarters of a mile from the town. As it was too late



THE MOUTHS OF THE AMUR RIVER (NIKOLAIEVSK HARBOUR).

to disembark, we spent that night on board, by no means regretting that it was to be the last. Notwithstanding the fact that our further movements seemed greatly embarrassed by the unexpected turn of events, we all dined merrily that evening, and were highly amused at the sight of a bottle of wine which the

captain produced from his private cellar, and which was textually labelled as follows: "Chatau La Roze. Bottle chez Bismark and Co., Port Arthur." Needless to say that we partook of its contents with the utmost



TYPES AT NIKOLAIEVSK.

caution. Nikolaievsk, formerly an important naval station, which was later transferred to Vladivostok, is situated on the left bank of the Amur, and though it cannot compete in commercial power with its younger rival, yet its position on the coast at the mouth of a

great Asiatic artery affords it a fair amount of traffic. Moreover, recent discovery of goldfields in the neighbourhood, together with its inexhaustible salmon fisheries, contributes in no slight degree to the welfare of



TYPES AT NIKOLAIEVSK.

the inhabitants, chiefly Russian officials, petty tradesmen, fishermen, and former Sakhalin convicts.

The buildings seemed to us quite luxurious after the log huts of Kamchatkan settlements. Here again stood in rows quantities of fish stores, where the *keta*

(*Coregonus ceta*) played the principal part, and was being salted and smoked for exportation in millions. Shoals of salmon were ascending the river at this time of year, everyone being busy at the fisheries, while nets and traps might be seen all over the gulf. Over a hundred Japanese smacks scoured the bay, hauling out the fish and carrying it ashore as fast as they could. No fresh information could be obtained here from the agent of the Amur Navigation Company, whom we approached next morning on the subject of the war, as the town had been left without any post for the last month ; all available steamers were being stopped at Khabarovsk for purposes of mobilisation. He made, however, a most reassuring statement, namely, that one of the Company's boats had managed to get through the blockade, and was due at Nikolaievsk in a couple of days, on the 14th of August, starting back to Khabarovsk on the following evening. We immediately secured berths at the office, and proceeded to carry over our belongings from the *Tsitsikar* to a "village green" on the banks of the river, which we had carefully selected beforehand, and pitched our tents at that place, on the outskirts of the town.

We spent next day visiting Nikolaievsk. Its broad, unpaved streets run parallel or at right angles to the seashore, and are bordered by rows of small,

dirty houses. The same two great rival firms as at Vladivostok and Blagovestchensk stand opposite each other, as if ready for combat, and the population presented a similar aspect of a mixture of various nationalities ; white summer caps of Russian officials



THE MAIN STREET, NIKOLAIEVSK.

could be seen amongst the predominating masses of Chinese coolies, Japanese fishermen, or native Giliaks. Here also strolled numerous ex-convicts, mostly Caucasians who had “done time” on “The Island,” and the most enterprising of whom had started different trades. One of the buildings appeared to us to surpass the others by its comparatively better

condition. We learnt that this was the Club, chiefly used by officers stationed in the district, and entered the place in hope of obtaining fresh news. There we



A GILIAK (NIKOLAIEVSK).

introduced ourselves to a colonel, who most obligingly told us all he knew about the war, viz. that the German Minister at Peking had been murdered, and that the Legations were besieged by the allied Boxers and Imperial troops. In addition to this, communication

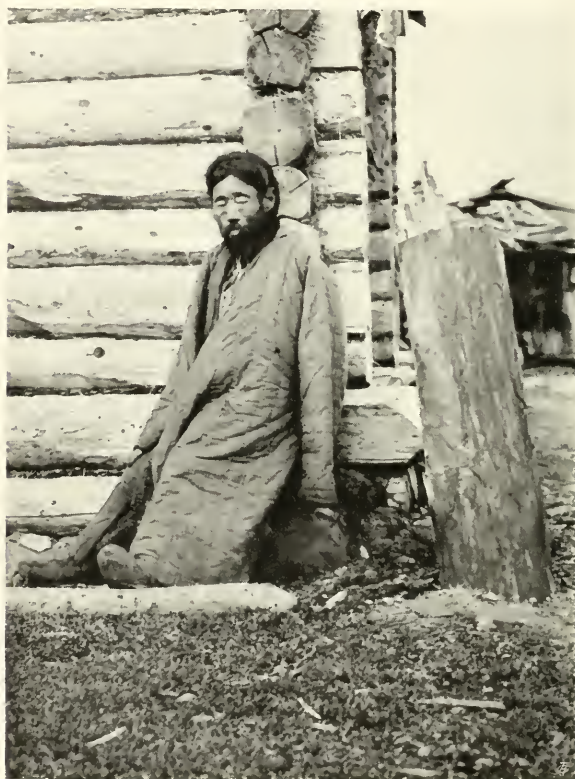
between Tien-Tsin and Peking had been cut off, the Pei-ho river turned by the Chinese, and the wells poisoned, thus rendering prompt relief totally impos-



GILIAKS.

sible. In this state of affairs, he said, and a month having elapsed since he had received the last post, foreign representatives must have all fallen into the hands of the Celestial fanatics. Soldiers were busy

decorating the Club with festoons and flags, and preparations were being carried on for a banquet on the



A LOCAL TYPE (NIKOLAEVSK).

following day in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the settlement by Admiral Nevelskoy. The colonel, who was president of the Club, invited us to that grand repast, but I declined the honour,



A NATIVE OF NIKOLAIEVSK.

alleging the presence of my wife and lack of anything like dress clothes. Next morning our encampment was surrounded by an inquisitive crowd, which thronged close to our tents, occasionally peeping in, and making us feel most uncomfortable, especially as the greater part of the people had already paid no slight attention to the bottle, in commemoration of the forthcoming local solemnity. Being unable to rid ourselves of that thirsty lot, we applied for assistance to the colonel, who obligingly sent a couple of soldiers to disperse the mob. We were, moreover, informed that the place we had chosen was by no means a safe one, on account of escaped convicts, who frequently came over from Sakhalin, as well as gold-prospecting adventurers, who gathered from all parts of Siberia. Only lately a party of five convicts had managed to cross the straits, with the aid of native Ainos, after having murdered their guardians, and were still at large. In consequence one of us was constantly on guard, and great was our relief when the river steamer was sighted at eleven a.m. on August the 14th.

Our parting with Vasska was quite touching, though he was in no way sorry to return home, and had never felt in perfect security amongst foreigners since the beginning of the war. We entrusted most of our baggage to Gabriel, Littledale's servant, who was

bound for Vladivostok, whence it was to be shipped around to London by sea. In the afternoon we embarked on board the *Cesarevitch* in a heavy downpour of rain. That stern-wheeler, belonging to the Amur Navigation Company, was a fairly clean boat, and our accommodation on it quite luxurious compared with that on the *Tsitsikar*. It was to convey us to Blagovestchensk, where we should have to shift on to a smaller boat on account of the shallows in the Shilka, which we knew so well. The *Cesarevitch* had already run the gauntlet under Chinese fire, and traces of the latter were now visible. Several bullets had gone through the second-class cabins, and one of them had struck the edge of the piano in the first-class saloon and glanced to the further corner, where it was found in a brass wash-tub. Fortunately, none of the bullets had hit the boat below the water-line, and the captain seemed to have no high opinion of Chinese marksmanship. The whole of next day was spent in taking in cargo, and delivering the heaped-up piles of postal arrears. Crowds of third-class passengers invaded the decks, soon rendering it impossible to move about on board.

A huge barge containing over a hundred horses for the front was attached to our boat, which was to tow it up to Khabarovsk, a distance of 940 versts (600

miles); this would unavoidably delay our advance, and it was not until seven p.m. that we eventually weighed anchor. Our captain declared that we should find no difficulty along the Amur, which was by this time clear of Chinese, both banks being under Russian military occupation. On his way to Khabarovsk he had come across numbers of corpses floating downstream, some of which had got caught in the steamer's wheel. Next morning a dense mist, which set in during the night, delayed us for six hours.

The country on either side presented a succession of low, undulating hills, all under timber, and villages were exceedingly scarce; here and again we passed two or three fishermen's huts, inhabited by Giliaks or Goldys, the predominant tribes of the district. These have a well-defined Mongol type, with their small eyes and prominent cheek-bones, and wear pig-tails. They live by fishing, and bear or sable hunting, and their costume is brightly picturesque. At the few halts we made to take in fuel at the larger settlements of Russian colonists, natives would gather round the landing-pier displaying their curious types and gear. When Tallent tried to take snapshots of some of them, they would take to their heels from fright, and it was only by surprise that he managed to obtain a few photographs. The ladies were particularly shy;

they were of low stature, like Japanese, and when at ease would bring out long pipes and sit smoking on



A BURIAT TYPE.

the shore. The greatest width of the Amur between Nikolaievsk and Khabarovsk attains three-quarters of a mile, narrowing at places to four or five hundred yards, and, although the current was not unusually

strong, we advanced at slow speed both on account of the constant mist in the early morning and of the heavy barge in tow behind us. August the 17th was a lovely warm day after the daily fog had cleared away, but here again we were delayed by a peasant who had thrown himself overboard. The steamer stopped, and boats were lowered to rescue the unhappy man. He was picked up a mile lower down by sheer force, after a desperate struggle, and safely brought back. He proved to be off his head from intoxication, and a couple more hours were thus lost over this affair.

On the following day a strong contrary wind sprang up. We could perceive in the faint distance a loftier range of hills, the Sikota-Alin, whilst the foreground presented the same monotonous aspect of rolling, wooded boulders, which gradually grew lower. Round the hamlet we could see occasional signs of cultivation, consisting chiefly of barley and potatoes. Now and then a fine sturgeon would be brought in and purchased by our *restaurateur* for the evening meal. After a stormy night we halted to take in wood at a village called Malmyjskoie, where native Goldy ladies came to meet us in bright procession. I learnt that the Goldys deify Bruin, and each settlement of that tribe owns its tame bear, which they hold in great respect, and though the inhabitants may be starving

yet the last bit of bread will always be offered to the strange object of worship. The steamer by this time in every way resembled a gipsy encampment; crowds of passengers lay at random across every passage and on the decks, with their dirty pillows and blankets strewn everywhere in a chaotic state of disorder, while their linen hung in all directions. A disagreeable smell of fish and garlic invaded our cabins, and we longed to reach Khabarovsk and part with this unpleasant company.

During the following night we advanced at half-speed owing to pitch darkness, and found ourselves at eight a.m. at Viatskoie, a large settlement within sixty versts of Khabarovsk, which, according to Little-dale, was "an important corner to turn." Here the banks of the river were low and sandy; mountains had given way to flat stretches of wooded scenery, where the everlasting fir trees were diversified by occasional oaks. In the afternoon, as we approached our first destination and the river broadened to a great extent, a strong breeze started up suddenly from the south, gradually turning into a regular gale, such as had not been witnessed for years, as the captain told us. The waves on the Amur grew to the size of a heavy sea; our ship began to pitch, while the spray kept spouting over the decks and bursting furiously

against the window-panes of the saloon. It was a warm wind, reminding one of the desert *simoun*; and such was its strength that none of the passengers dared to remain on deck for fear of being blown overboard. It was indeed a strange sight to watch



HUGE RUDDERS TO THE BARGES ON THE AMUR RIVER.

the water carried off above the surface of the river and the spray whirling round and whizzing up to a great height. Several planks from the floor of the lower deck were literally smashed to atoms and washed away. Our steamer advanced at the rate of three miles an hour, and, nearing Khabarovsk, we saw numbers of sailing boats and launches cast ashore

considerably damaged, and lying wrecked, while huge waves broke over them in rapid succession. Numerous barges, laden with hay for the horses at the front, lay sideways, half swamped, in the teeth of the hurricane, and both banks of the river were a wild scene of



LOCAL CARGO BOAT AT Khabarovsk.

devastation. Landing was naturally out of the question for us; it was with great difficulty that we were able to anchor in midstream opposite the town, close to the junction of the Amur and Ussuri rivers. Here we spent the night amid the roar of the gale and shouts of the terrified passengers. Next morning we found

that the wind had calmed down, though not sufficiently to permit us to land. Nevertheless, our captain decided to take us alongside one of the more sheltered jetties, which he succeeded in doing after long-continued efforts. Anxious as we were to obtain news and get our letters, we made straight for the post-office, where an official informed us that a great number of letters had gone astray owing to the war troubles. We received, however, some letters from home, and learnt that Peking was at last in the hands of the allied troops, who had succeeded in relieving the Legations after that memorable siege, which will ever remain a mystery in the annals of history.

Our boat resumed its journey at four p.m. Though we had vaguely unpleasant prospects of having to shift over to another steamer some four hundred versts further up-river on account of the sandbanks, yet we hoped to get through without change to Blagovestchensk. Having started from Khabarovsk on the 21st of August, it was not until the 28th that we succeeded in reaching Blagovestchensk—a distance of six hundred miles. The weather was fine and unusually warm the whole way. But few incidents worth recording broke the monotony of that week on the Central Amur. Another barge, without horses this time, was inflicted on our steamer, delaying our

advance and reducing the speed to ten versts an hour.

Above the junction of the Sungari River the Amur grows considerably narrower. On the 24th we were



TYPES ON THE AMUR RIVER.

met with the good tidings that a dangerous shallow had been safely negotiated during the night, and in the afternoon we entered the gorges of the Khingan, where we had intended to make an attempt after "izubra" stags. One of the passengers informed us that, although the Celestials had been driven back

on every point, yet numerous Chinese marauding parties still scoured the immediate districts of the interior, and strongly dissuaded us from carrying out this hazardous plan. Moreover, he added, it was not impossible that navigation on the river might be closed by our return, involving for us a long journey to Stretensk by land. In consequence we decided to abandon the trip and put it off for another year.

As we halted next morning at Radde to take in wood, we were met on the pier by Kobosoff, the hunter who was to have accompanied us, and entrusted to his care half a dozen cases of stores, with instructions to keep them till the following August, and in case of our not turning up, to appropriate their contents. If we had actually returned I quite expect we should have found our supplies ransacked long before the appointed time. Opposite the village Kobosoff showed us the grave of a dozen Russian soldiers lately killed in action, and told us that the inhabitants were still all under arms for fear of incursions on the part of the enemy.

Bidding farewell to our future guide, we resumed our course through that most picturesque part of the Amur. Autumn had now set in, with its wonderful variety of colouring, and the woods on either side presented lovely scenery. The evergreen cedars and

pinces stood unaltered among the reddish oaks and acacias in full bloom, in the dense entanglement of wild grape, hops, and thick underwood. Steep rocks overhung the river, and the wild aspect of the country made us regret our hasty determination. As we stood on deck, we caught sight of several swollen bodies of Chinamen drifting slowly downstream among logs of floating timber, together with swamped canoes and cartwheels ; these were, probably, the last vestiges of the wholesale massacre which had recently taken place round Blagovestchensk, where we duly arrived on the 28th, after a tedious delay in repairing a paddle-wheel damaged by the drifting timber.

We learnt in the town that the small steamer was due to start that very day at ten a.m. for Stretensk, and soon found that the accommodation on board was by no means attractive. Having hurriedly transported our baggage, we proceeded to purchase some stores, and called at the back doors of the shops, which were closed on account of its being a holiday. Passing through the garden of Government House, we were shown several big guns lately captured from the Chinese. Some of them were of the modern type, others two or three hundred years old, awkward-looking cannons, with small brass idols carved on the sides, and thoroughly explaining the harmless bom-

bardment of the town. Opposite Blagovestchensk we could see the smouldering ruins of the formerly flourishing Chinese settlement of Sakhalin, at present occupied by the Russians. It was a strange contrast with what we had seen on our way to Kamchatka. Destruction had passed over like a ghastly whirlwind, and many a sad reflection crossed our minds at the sight of those visible traces of desolation and death. Next day we were slowly advancing along the Upper Amur. Our launch was overcrowded with passengers, amongst whom was a genuine admiral, who had just left his post on the Russian Pacific Squadron, and was returning to St. Petersburg. This new fellow-traveller, who was accompanied by his aide-de-camp, was a prepossessing individual, but proved a most undesirable companion during the week's journey to Stretensk. Although there were several ladies on board besides my wife, that high official occupied the best cabin, and was constantly helped to the best food, which was very scarce, the army commissariat having secured all available supplies for the troops. Moreover, it was found necessary, owing to low water, to shift us at Pokrovskoie, at the mouth of the Shilka, on to a flat-bottomed passenger barge, which we awaited at that place fully twenty-four hours. Fortunately, it was not until we were within ninety versts of Stretensk that

we were made to go on to this uncomfortable boat, the admiral having put pressure on the captain to convey us as far up as he could. But here we found ourselves piled up, like livestock, in heaps, and the single ladies'



HOMeward BOUND
(THE AUTHOR AND GENERAL BOLDYREFF).

cabin was instantly occupied without ceremony by the admiral! It was with no slight difficulty that the gentleman was persuaded to clear out in favour of the weaker sex. In this manner we finally turned the "main corner" of our journey, and reached Stretensk at 9.30 p.m. on September the 5th. Our train—the

railway now being open to the public—was due to start that very night at eleven. Our baggage was hurriedly carried over by voluntary porters, mostly soldiers, to the station, half a mile distant, in pitch darkness, and we considered ourselves lucky to get off so cheaply as we slowly steamed out of Stretensk. Ten days later we parted with Littledale at Moscow, and safely arrived at St. Petersburg.

Recalling to mind this trip to the furthestmost east, I may say, in conclusion, that, although three years have since elapsed, reminiscences of the voyage and successful sport will ever remain clear and bright, and though great were the hardships and discomforts undergone, I cannot share the well-known sentiment of the French writer who avers that "travels are a delightful invention on account of the pleasure they afford in preparing for them and recollecting them, the most tiresome part being their accomplishment."

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